

A NEW SHAKESPEARE COMEDY
A One-Act Play

by

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SYNOPSIS

The greatest (and oldest) living Shakespearean actors assemble for the world premiere performance of a newly-discovered Shakespeare play, a history play, *Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots*. During the opening night performance, the serious history play unintentionally turns into a raucous comedy.

TABLE OF SCENES

1. Prologue
2. Opening Night
3. Beheading Scene
4. Love Scene
5. Ghost Scene
6. Mad Scene
7. Epilogue

TIME

The present.

PLACE

On stage.

SETS

The sets are simple as in an authentic Shakespeare play.

An Elizabethan throne (St. Edward's throne).

Floor cushions.

A full moon.

CHARACTERS

DIRECTOR:

His name is Sir William. He has been knighted. He is distinguished looking with white hair and white beard. He is renowned for directing many distinguished productions of Shakespeare plays over his very long career. He has worked with all the actors many times.

LEADING MAN:

His name is Sir Lawrence. He has been knighted. He is upper crust English. He is distinguished looking. He is a bit of a toff, exhibiting extreme elegance in clothes and manners. He speaks French. He is hard-of-hearing, but he is too vain to wear a hearing aid. He is extremely nearsighted, but he is too vain to wear eyeglasses. He is forgetful. In his youth, he played handsome, leading man roles opposite the Leading Lady: Romeo (Romeo and Juliet), Hamlet (Hamlet), Orlando (As You Like It), and Benedick (Much Ado About Nothing), among others. He played Macbeth and Hamlet opposite the Bohemian Lady. He also played Richard III. In the new Shakespeare play, he plays Robert Dudley, Queen Elizabeth's most trusted advisor and favorite.

LEADING LADY:

Her name is Juliet. She is a Dame. She is upper crust English. She has a superior air. She thinks she is to be treated like royalty. She is condescending and dismissive toward the Bohemian Lady. In her youth, she played romantic leading lady roles opposite the Leading Man: Juliet (Romeo and Juliet), Ophelia (Hamlet), Rosalind (As You Like It), and Beatrice (Much Ado About Nothing), among others. She also played Ophelia opposite the Bohemian Lady in Hamlet. In the new Shakespeare play, she plays Queen Elizabeth I.

BOHEMIAN LADY:

Her name is Gruoch, Lady Macbeth's real first name. She is not a Dame. She is Scottish. She has a manly voice and manner. She can be sarcastic and gruff. In the distant past, she played opposite the Leading Man: Lady Macbeth (Macbeth) and Queen Gertrude (Hamlet). Also in the distant past, she played Queen Gertrude opposite the Leading Lady in Hamlet. In the new Shakespeare play, she plays Mary Queen of Scots.

The LEADING LADY and the BOHEMIAN LADY were bitter rivals for Shakespearean roles in the past. The Leading Lady got the romantic roles (Juliet, Ophelia, Rosalind, and Beatrice). The Bohemian Lady got the ruthless roles (Lady Macbeth and Queen Gertrude). They still resent each other. Because Queen Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots were bitter rivals for the English crown, the casting in the new Shakespeare play is perfect.

PRACTICAL JOKER:

His name is Mickey. He has not been knighted. He is Irish. He is short. He is a drunk. He likes to play practical jokes. He is light-hearted and jovial. In the distant past, he played Robin Goodfellow/Puck and Nick Bottom (A Midsummer Night's Dream), Touchstone (As You Like It), the Fool (King Lear), and Falstaff (Henry IV, etc.). In the new Shakespeare play, he plays Queen Elizabeth's court jester.

COSTUMES

DIRECTOR:

He wears a tuxedo because it is opening night.

LEADING MAN:

He wears colorful, Elizabethan court clothes. He has a cellphone in his pocket. He does not wear eyeglasses or a hearing aid even though he needs them. In the Mad Scene, he appears as King Lear and as Richard III. As Richard III, he wears a hump under a cape and carries a long sword.

LEADING LADY:

She wears a colorful, Elizabethan court dress, a crown, a scepter, and a red wig that hides balding, white hair. In the Mad Scene, she appears as Ophelia. She wears flower garlands in her hair and around her neck. She carries a basket of flowers for strewing.

BOHEMIAN LADY:

She is dressed like Mary Queen of Scots in the Blair execution portrait. She wears a black dress with a white ruff and white cuffs, a white lace cap with a long veil, and a crucifix on a necklace. In the Ghost Scene, she appears as the Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots. She wears an all-white version of the Blair execution dress to appear like a ghost. There are blood stains on the white ruff. She wears a black hood over her head to appear headless. She carries a dummy head with white face powder, a white powdered wig, and blood stains around the neck. The dummy head does not wear the white lace cap and the long veil. In the Mad Scene, she appears as King Lear and as Lady Macbeth. As King Lear, she wears the Ghost of May Queen of Scots costume, but without the black hood, the bloody ruff, and the dummy head. As Lady Macbeth, she wears the black dress in the Blair execution portrait, but without a white ruff and white cuffs. She does not wear the white lace cap, the long veil, and the crucifix. She carries a lighted candle.

PRACTICAL JOKER:

He wears a colorful, Elizabethan, court jester costume, including a coxcomb on the crest of his cap and jingling bells on his toes. He has a whiskey flask in his pocket. In the Mad Scene, he appears as Queen Gertrude and as Nick Bottom. As Queen Gertrude, he wears the Leading Lady/Queen Elizabeth's red wig and crown. As Nick Bottom, he wears the head of a jackass and a coronet of musk roses.

PROPS

A chopping block.
An axe without blood.
A bloody axe.
A scepter.
A breakaway lute where the neck separates from the body.
A dummy head of the BOHEMIAN LADY as the Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots.
A set of false teeth for the LEADING MAN.
A basket of flowers for the LEADING LADY as Ophelia.
A long sword for the LEADING MAN as Richard III.
A lighted candle for the BOHEMIAN LADY as Lady Macbeth.

SOUND EFFECTS

A whoopee cushion "farting"
A cellphone ringing.
A real-life fight between two alley cats followed by the mighty blow of an axe.
Big Ben striking one o'clock in the morning.

SCENE 1
PROLOGUE

Set: The stage is dark except for a spotlight on the DIRECTOR.

DIRECTOR:

No tale of woe will we present.

If laughs you seek, you'll be content.

There'll be no death scene played tonight.

You'll shed no tear. You'll laugh with delight.

**Two feuding actresses you will meet
and laugh to watch them as they compete.**

**They play two queens who in real life
battled mightily and caused great strife.**

One slept alone in her virgin bed.

The other lost her royal head.

**The leading man is slightly deaf
and cannot see without his specs.**

**And there's a fool of good humor and wit
who'll make you laugh until your sides split.**

And I'm the director of this merry show.

So relax, sit back, and away we go.

The stage lights come up.

SCENE 2
OPENING NIGHT

Set: There is no set for this scene.

The stage lights come up on the play.

The LEADING MAN, the LEADING LADY, and the BOHEMIAN LADY are downstage warming up for the opening night performance. They are vocalizing and stretching. The LEADING LADY is downstage center. The LEADING MAN is on her stage right side. The BOHEMIAN LADY is on her stage left side. The PRACTICAL JOKER is downstage left relaxing and drinking whiskey from his flask. The DIRECTOR is offstage right.

DIRECTOR *from offstage right:*

Places in five minutes.

LEADING LADY *repeating in exaggerated, round tones:*

How now brown cow. Etc.

The BOHEMIAN LADY clears her throat and shakes her head vigorously to loosen her facial muscles.

BOHEMIAN LADY *repeating rapidly:*

Unique New York. Unique New York. Etc.

The LEADING MAN simultaneously pats his head and rubs his belly to improve his coordination.

LEADING MAN *repeating:*

Sally sells seashells by the seashore. Etc.

The PRACTICAL JOKER is already relaxed and slightly drunk.

PRACTICAL JOKER, *raising his flask high, toasts:*

Here's to Sally in the Seychelles.

The PRACTICAL JOKER takes a drink of whiskey from his flask. (The PRACTICAL JOKER drinks throughout the play and becomes more and more drunk.) ALL ignore the PRACTICAL JOKER's toast and drinking.

LEADING LADY *repeating graciously:*

The preful princess pierced and prick'd a pretty pleasing pricket. Etc.

[Holofernes, Love's Labours Lost Act IV scene ii]

BOHEMIAN LADY *repeating:*

How much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood. Etc.

LEADING MAN *repeating:*

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.

PRACTICAL JOKER, *raising his flask high, interjects a toast:*

Here's to Peter's pecker.

The PRACTICAL JOKER takes another drink of whiskey from his flask. The BOHEMIAN LADY looks disapprovingly at the PRACTICAL JOKER for drinking on opening night. The LEADING MAN and the LEADING LADY ignore the PRACTICAL JOKER's drinking, and they keep reciting the tongue twisters until the DIRECTOR enters.

LEADING MAN *continues:*

If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, how many pickled peppers did Peter Piper pick?

BOHEMIAN LADY, *referring to the PRACTICAL JOKER:*

He's a pepper short of a peck.

PRACTICAL JOKER:

But I am pickled.

LEADING LADY *to the PRACTICAL JOKER:*

Either thou art most ignorant by age or thou wert born a fool.

[Leontes, A Winter's Tale Act II scene i]

PRACTICAL JOKER:

Let me play the fool:

With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come,

And let my liver rather heat with whiskey than my heart cool with mortifying groans.

[Gratiano, The Merchant of Venice Act I scene i. wine.]

The PRACTICAL JOKER takes another drink of whiskey from his flask. The DIRECTOR, with a flourish, enters downstage right. ALL turn their attention to the DIRECTOR.

DIRECTOR *excitedly to ALL:*

The world premiere performance of a newly-discovered Shakespeare play, *Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots*.

BOHEMIAN LADY *to the LEADING LADY:*

I should have gotten the role of Queen Elizabeth.

LEADING LADY *to the BOHEMIAN LADY:*

Don't be ridiculous.

You'll act better without a head ... and look better too.

DIRECTOR *gently scolding the LEADING LADY:*
Now, Juliet.

LEADING LADY *correcting:*
Dame! Juliet.

PRACTICAL JOKER, *raising his flask high, toasts:*
Damn! Juliet.

*The PRACTICAL JOKER takes another drink of whiskey from his flask.
ALL ignore the PRACTICAL JOKER's insult of the LEADING LADY.*

DIRECTOR *to the LEADING MAN:*
Readiness is all.
[Hamlet, Hamlet Act V scene ii]
Sir Lawrence, do you know your lines?

LEADING MAN:
I never forget a line. I have the memory of an elephant.

(In fact, the LEADING MAN will forget his lines.)

BOHEMIAN LADY:
Unfortunately, there are no elephants in the play.

DIRECTOR *to ALL:*
Once more unto the breach, dear friends.
[Henry V, King Henry V Act III scene i]
It's opening night!

BOHEMIAN LADY *warns:*
It's also the ides of March.
[Soothsayer, Julius Caesar Act I scene ii. Beware the ides of March.]

PRACTICAL JOKER *raising his flask high, toasts:*
To the eyes of Marsh, whoever he is.

The PRACTICAL JOKER takes another drink of whiskey from his flask.

LEADING MAN *to ALL:*
Screw your courage to the sticking-place, and we'll not fail.
[Lady Macbeth, Macbeth Act I scene vii]

DIRECTOR to the *LEADING LADY* and the *BOHEMIAN LADY*:

The beheading scene is up first. Give it everything you've got. And knock 'em dead!

LEADING LADY looking menacingly at the *BOHEMIAN LADY*:

I shall.

BOHEMIAN LADY menacingly to the *LEADING LADY*:

Break a leg!

["Break a leg" normally means "good luck" in American theatre, but the BOHEMIAN LADY means it with malice.]

LEADING MAN to *ALL*:

Merde!

["Good luck" in French theatre. The LEADING MAN speaks French.]

LEADING LADY to *ALL*:

Toi, Toi, Toi!

["Good luck" in opera houses. The LEADING LADY is posh.]

DIRECTOR to *ALL*:

In boca lupo!

[The polite form of "good luck" in Italian theatre.]

PRACTICAL JOKER to *ALL*:

Ba Fan Gu!

[The vulgar form of "good luck" in Italian theatre. The PRACTICAL JOKER is vulgar.]

Oh, and MACBETH!

ALL but the *PRACTICAL JOKER*, inhaling deeply in shock:

Oh-----!

The DIRECTOR, the LEADING MAN, the LEADING LADY, and the BOHEMIAN LADY shrink backwards away from the PRACTICAL JOKER because it is bad luck to say the name of the Scottish play in a theatre except during the rehearsal or performance of Macbeth. (Saying Macbeth and the ides of March foretell the calamitous performance that is about to happen.)

The stage lights go dark.

PRACTICAL JOKER to the audience:

Jesters do oft prove prophets.

[Regan, King Lear Act V scene iii]

DIRECTOR, in the dark, to *ALL*:

Places, everybody. Places please.

SCENE 3
BEHEADING SCENE

Set: There is an Elizabethan throne centerstage. There are cushions on the floor on both sides of the throne. Stage left there is a chopping block with an axe stuck in it.

Scene Summary: The LEADING LADY and the BOHEMIAN LADY get into an unscripted cat fight. The LEADING LADY and the BOHEMIAN LADY hurl unscripted, Shakespearean insults at each other as they fight.

Stagehands bring the Elizabethan throne and the floor cushions to centerstage. Stagehands bring the chopping block and the axe to stage left.

The stage lights come up.

The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth is standing in front of the throne and holding a scepter. The LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley is standing on her stage right side. The chopping block and axe are on her stage left side. The BOHEMIAN LADY and the PRACTICAL JOKER are offstage left. The DIRECTOR is offstage right.

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley:

**It cannot be that, while warm life plays in Mary's veins,
Elizabeth should entertain an hour, one minute, nay, one quiet breath of rest.**

[Cardinal Pandolph, King John Act III scene iv. that infant's, the misplaced John.]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

**When this traitor, Mary Stuart,
who all this while hath revell'd in the night
shall see us sitting in our throne,
her treasons will sit blushing in her face,
not able to endure the sight of day, but self-affrighted tremble at her sin.**

[Richard II, Richard II, Act III scene ii. Bolingbroke, his.]

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley advising the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

**And at thy mercy shalt she stoop and kneel,
And on her shalt thou ease thy angry heart.**

[Tamora/Revenge, Titus Andronicus Act V scene ii. they, them.]

Hide it in smiles and affability.

[Brutus, Julius Caesar Act II scene i]

**Bear welcome in your eye, your hand, your tongue:
Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under 't.**

[Lady Macbeth, Macbeth Act I scene v]

False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

[Macbeth, Macbeth Act I scene vii]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

Let us do so: for we are at the stake, and bay'd about with many enemies.

[Octavius, Julius Caesar Act IV scene i]

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley:

She that stands upon a slippery place makes nice of no vile hold to stay her up:

That Elizabeth may stand, then Mary needs must fall;

So be it, for it cannot be but so.

[Cardinal Pandulph, King John Act III scene iv. He, him, John, Arthur.]

The BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots and the PRACTICAL JOKER/Court Jester as her escort enter stage left. They stop near the stage left wing.

The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth gives an obviously fake smile to the BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots.

BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots to the PRACTICAL JOKER/Court Jester:

Some that smile have in their hearts, I fear, millions of mischiefs.

[Octavius, Julius Caesar Act IV scene i]

One may smile, and smile, and be a villain;

At least I'm sure it may be so in England.

[Hamlet, Hamlet Act I scene v. Denmark.]

PRACTICAL JOKER/Court Jester to the BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots:

I am sorry for thee:

Thou art come to answer a stony adversary,

an inhuman wretch incapable of pity,

and empty from any dram of mercy.

[Duke, Merchant of Venice Act IV scene i]

His eyes light up.

A wee dram.

The PRACTICAL JOKER takes out his flask, toasts the BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots, and takes a drink of whiskey from his flask.

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth to the PRACTICAL JOKER/Court Jester:

Bring thou this fiend of Scotland.

[Macduff, Macbeth Act IV scene iii]

Make room, and let her stand before our face.

[Duke, Merchant of Venice Act IV scene i]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth to the BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots:

Approach, and speak.

[Octavius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra Act III scene xii]

Come as humbly as thou used to creep to holy altars.

[Patroclus, Troilus and Cressida Act III scene iii. they.]

The BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots crosses to the stage left side of the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth.

BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots:

In all submission and humility Mary doth present herself unto your highness.

[York, Henry VI Pt 2 Act V scene i. York, himself.]

The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth sits down on the throne. There is the sound effect of a whoopee cushion "farting." (The PRACTICAL JOKER had placed the whoopee cushion on the throne as a joke before the curtain went up on the play.) The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth looks disapprovingly at the PRACTICAL JOKER.

The PRACTICAL JOKER/Court Jester, slightly drunk, stumbles and chuckles as he exits stage left.

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth to the BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots:

Discomfortable cousin!

[Richard II, Richard II, Act III scene ii]

What hast thou to say in thy defense?

Wherefore shouldst I forgive thy offense?

Lest I

both my revenge and hate loose upon thee, in the name of justice, without all terms of pity, speak;

Thine answer.

[King, All's Well that Ends Well Act II scene iii. loosing.]

BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots:

I humbly do desire your grace of pardon.

[Portia as a lawyer, Merchant of Venice Act IV scene i]

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley to the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

Fear, and not love, begets her penitence:

Forget to pity her, lest thy pity prove a serpent that will sting thee to the heart.

[Duke of York, Richard II Act V scene iii]

BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots referring to the LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley:

What black magician conjures up this fiend,

to stop devoted charitable deeds?

[Lady Anne, Richard III Act I scene ii]

BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots to the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

The world thinks, and I think so too,

that thou but lead'st this fashion of thy malice to the last hour of act;

And then 'tis thought thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse

more strange than is thy strange apparent cruelty.

We all expect a gentle answer.

[Duke, Merchant of Venice Act IV scene i]

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley to the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

What, wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice?

[Shylock, Merchant of Venice Act IV scene i]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth to the BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots:

Thy words move rage and not remorse in me.

[Suffolk, Henry VI Pt 2 Act IV scene i]

BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots pleading graciously:

What is my offence?

Where are the evidence that do accuse me?

What lawful quest have given their verdict up unto the frowning judge?

Or who pronounced the bitter sentence of poor Mary's death?

Before I be convict by course of law, to threaten me with death is most unlawful.

[Clarence, Richard III Act I scene iv. Clarence's death.]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

**In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt, but, being seasoned with a gracious voice,
obscures the show of evil?**

[Bassanio, The Merchant of Venice Act III scene ii]

BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots pleading virtuously:

**I charge you, as you hope to have redemption by Christ's dear blood shed for our grievous sins,
that you depart and lay no hands on me.**

The deed you undertake is damnable.

[Clarence, Richard III Act I scene iv]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

**In religion, what damned error, but some sober brow will bless it and approve it with a text,
hiding the grossness with fair ornament?**

There is no vice so simple but assumes some mark of virtue on her outward parts.

[Bassanio, The Merchant of Venice Act III scene ii. his.]

*The LEADING LADY, holding the scepter, gets off the throne and confronts the BOHEMIAN LADY
face-to-face.*

BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots pleading:

Can no prayers pierce thee?

[Gratiano, Merchant of Venice Act IV scene i]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

No, none that thou hast wit enough to make.

[Shylock, Merchant of Venice Act IV scene i]

**You may as well go stand upon the beach
and bid the main flood bate his usual height;
You may as well use question with the wolf
why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb;
You may as well forbid the mountain pines
to wag their high tops and to make no noise,
when they are fretten with the gusts of heaven;
You may as well do anything most hard,
as seek to soften that--than which what's harder?--
My Tudor heart.**

[Antonio, Merchant of Venice Act IV scene i. My Jewish heart.]

The BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots begins weeping.

BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots pleading:

How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?

[Duke, Merchant of Venice Act IV scene i]

Relent, and save your soul.

[Clarence, Richard III Act I scene iv. souls.]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

Relent! 'tis cowardly and womanish.

[First Murderer, Richard III Act I scene iv]

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley:

**Trust not those cunning waters of her eyes, for villany is not without such tears;
And she, long traded in it, makes it seem like rivers of remorse and innocency.**

[Salisbury, King John Act IV scene iii. his, rheum, he.]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

We shall proceed to judgment:

By my soul I swear there is no power in the tongue of man to alter me.

[Shylock, Merchant of Venice Act IV scene i]

No leisure bated,

No, not to stay the grinding of the axe, thy head should be struck off.

[Hamlet, Hamlet Act V scene ii. my head.]

*The BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots stops weeping and wipes her eyes.
A cellphone rings repeatedly during the following speech.*

BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots pleading:

I do beseech you!

**The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath:
It is twice blest;
It blesseth she that gives and she that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest:
It becomes the throned monarch better than her crown;
Her sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
the attribute to awe and majesty, wherein doth sit the dread and fear of monarchs.**

[Portia as a lawyer, Merchant of Venice Act IV scene i. he, his, kings.]

LEADING MAN *sharply to the audience:*
Turn off your phone.

BOHEMIAN LADY *angrily to the LEADING MAN:*
It's your phone, you old fool!

The PRACTICAL JOKER enters stage left. He is drunk and thinks that he has been summoned. The PRACTICAL JOKER, barely able to stand, remains near the stage left wing. The PRACTICAL JOKER sways to and fro as he watches the rest of the scene.

PRACTICAL JOKER *drunkenly bellows:*
Thou bellow-ed?

ALL ignore the PRACTICAL JOKER. The LEADING MAN takes his cellphone out of his pocket, turns it off, and puts it back in his pocket.

LEADING MAN *with hurt feelings to himself:*
The lady doth protest too much, methinks.
[Queen Gertrude, Hamlet Act III scene ii]

BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots *continues pleading:*
**But mercy is above this sceptred sway;
It is enthroned in the hearts of monarchs,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's when mercy seasons justice.
Therefore, consider this, that, in the course of justice, none of us should see salvation:
We do pray for mercy; and that same prayer doth teach us all to render the deeds of mercy.**
[Portia as a lawyer, Merchant of Venice Act IV scene i. kings.]

BOHEMIAN LADY *whispers angrily to the LEADING MAN:*
You ruined my speech.

BOHEMIAN LADY *adlibbing angrily to the LEADING LADY:*

**Villain, thou know'st no law of God nor man:
No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity.**

[Lady Anne, Richard III Act I scene ii]

In God's name, I'll ascend the regal throne.

[Henry Bolingbroke, Richard II Act IV scene i]

I mean to take possession of my right.

[York, Henry VI Pt 3 Act I scene i]

The BOHEMIAN LADY contemptuously grabs the scepter from the LEADING LADY and takes a seat on the throne. This usurpation of the scepter and throne is not in the script. The LEADING MAN and the LEADING LADY are astonished by this unscripted usurpation.

LEADING MAN *whispers to the LEADING LADY:*
She's gone off script.

At first, the LEADING LADY does not know what to say. Then she begins to adlib too.

LEADING LADY *adlibbing:*

And shall I stand, and thou sit in my throne?

[Henry VI, Henry VI Pt 3 Act I scene i]

BOHEMIAN LADY *adlibbing:*

It must and shall be so: content thyself.

[York, Henry VI Pt 3 Act I scene i]

I mean to take possession of my right.

[York, Henry VI Pt 3 Act I scene i]

LEADING LADY *adlibbing:*

Bloody, bawdy villain!

Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindles villain!

O vengeance!

[Hamlet, Hamlet Act II scene ii]

A sceptre snatch'd with an unruly hand must be as boisterously maintain'd as gain'd.

[Cardinal Pandolph, King John Act III scene iv]

**For well we know, no hand of blood and bone can gripe the sacred handle of our sceptre,
unless she do profane, steal, or usurp.**

[Richard II, Richard II Act III scene iii. he.]

**Proud Stuart shall not usurp my right,
Nor hold the sceptre in her childish fist,
Nor wear the diadem upon her head.**

[York, Henry VI Pt 2 Act I scene i. Lancaster, his.]

Not all the water in the rough rude sea can wash the balm off from an anointed queen.

[Richard II, Richard II Act III scene ii. king.]

BOHEMIAN LADY:

**I would to God that the inclusive verge of golden metal that rounds thy brow were red-hot steel,
to sear thee to the brain!**

[Lady Anne, Richard III Act IV scene i. my, me.]

LEADING MAN *adlibbing:*

What, shall we suffer this?

Let's pluck her down:

My heart for anger burns;

I cannot brook it.

[Westmoreland, Henry VI Pt 3 Act I scene i]

LEADING LADY *adlibbing:*

**Thou factious Queen of Scots, descend my throne,
and kneel for grace and mercy at my feet;**

I am thy sovereign.

[Henry VI, Henry VI Pt 3 Act I scene i. Duke of York.]

Obey, audacious traitor; kneel for grace.

[Somerset, Henry VI Pt 2 Act V scene i]

Bow, stubborn knees.

Be soft as sinews of the newborn babe!

[King Claudius, Hamlet Act III scene iii]

The BOHEMIAN LADY refuses to kneel.

BOHEMIAN LADY *adlibbing:*

I will not do't, lest I surcease to honour mine own truth

And by my body's action teach my mind a most inherent baseness.

[Coriolanus, Coriolanus Act III scene ii]

Know I shall not resign

the supreme seat, the throne majestic,

the scepter'd office of my ancestors,

my state of fortune, and my due of birth,

the lineal glory of my royal house,

to the corruption of a blemished stock.

[Buckingham, Richard III Act III scene vii. your. Catholics considered Queen Elizabeth as the illegitimate stock of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn.]

I am far better born than is the queen.

[York, Henry VI Pt 2 Act V scene i. king.]

LEADING LADY *adlibbing:*

What heir of Henry is there alive but me?

And who is England's queen but great Henry's heir?

[Richard III, Richard III Act IV scene iv. York, we, king, York's.]

BOHEMIAN LADY *adlibbing*:

Thy mother's name is ominous to children.

[Queen Elizabeth, Richard III Act IV scene iv.]

The LEADING LADY pulls the BOHEMIAN LADY off the throne. The LEADING MAN grabs the scepter from the BOHEMIAN LADY.

LEADING LADY *whispers angrily*:

How dare you try to upstage me.

The LEADING LADY slaps the BOHEMIAN LADY's face. This slap is not in the script.

PRACTICAL JOKER:

A hit, a very palpable hit.

[Osric, Hamlet Act V scene ii]

BOHEMIAN LADY *whispers angrily*:

That's not in the script.

LEADING LADY *whispers angrily*:

In show business, you're only as good as your last *hit*.

BOHEMIAN LADY *whispers angrily*:

Let us to't pell-mell

if not to heaven, then hand in hand to hell.

[Richard III, Richard III Act V scene iii]

LEADING LADY *whispers angrily*:

If you do, madam, I am for you.

[Sampson, Romeo and Juliet Act I scene i. sir.]

BOHEMIAN LADY *whispers angrily*:

Have at you now!

[Laertes, Hamlet Act V scene ii]

A catfight ensues. The LEADING LADY and the BOHEMIAN LADY adlib Shakespearean insults as they fight. The DIRECTOR enters stage right and stands near the stage right wing. The LEADING MAN, carrying the scepter, crosses stage right to the DIRECTOR. The DIRECTOR and the LEADING MAN, clinging to each other, watch in horror from stage right near the stage right wing. The PRACTICAL JOKER gleefully watches the catfight from stage left near the stage left wing. The PRACTICAL JOKER throws punches in the air as if he is participating in the fight. Also, he drinks whiskey from his flask. He becomes more drunk for the next scene.

BOHEMIAN LADY:

Poor painted queen!

[Queen Margaret, Richard III Act I scene iii]

LEADING LADY

O most wicked fiend!

[Juliet, Romeo and Juliet Act III scene v]

BOHEMIAN LADY:

A queen of shreds and patches!

[Hamlet, Hamlet Act III scene iv. king.]

LEADING LADY:

Ancient damnation!

[Juliet, Romeo and Juliet Act III scene v]

BOHEMIAN LADY:

Thou hateful withered hag!

[Richard III, Richard III Act I scene iii]

The LEADING LADY becomes angrier at the suggestion that she is wrinkled.

LEADING LADY:

Withered? Withered?!

BOHEMIAN LADY:

Foul wrinkled witch!

[Richard III, Richard III Act I scene iii]

LEADING LADY:

A pox of wrinkles!

[Timon, Timon of Athens Act IV scene iii]

BOHEMIAN LADY:

Thou whoreson, senseless villain!

[Dromio of Ephesus, Comedy of Errors Act IV scene iv. Catholics considered Queen Elizabeth the daughter of a whore.]

LEADING LADY:

Dissembling harlot, thou art false in all!

[Dromio of Ephesus, Comedy of Errors Act IV scene iv]

BOHEMIAN LADY:

Never hung poison on a fouler toad.

[Lady Anne, Richard III Act I scene ii]

The BOHEMIAN LADY sticks out her tongue at the LEADING LADY.

LEADING LADY:

**From the extremest upward of thy head
to the descent and dust below thy foot,
a most toad-spotted traitor.**

[Edgar, King Lear Act V scene iii]

The smallest worm will turn being trodden on.

[Clifford, Henry VI Pt 3 Act II scene ii]

The LEADING LADY stomps on the BOHEMIAN LADY's upstage foot.

BOHEMIAN LADY holding the shin of her sore foot:

Vile worm, thou wast o'erlook'd even in thy birth.

[Pistol, Merry Wives of Windsor Act V scene v]

LEADING LADY:

Teeth hadst thou in thy head when thou wast born, to signify thou camest to bite the world.

[Henry VI, Henry VI Pt 3 Act V scene vi]

BOHEMIAN LADY:

Even at thy teat thou hadst thy tyranny.

[Lavinia, Titus Andronicus Act II scene iii]

LEADING LADY:

Thou frantic woman, what dost thou make here?

Shall thy old dugs once more a traitor rear?

[Duke of York, Richard II Act V scene iii. Mary Queen of Scots was the mother of James I, the successor to Queen Elizabeth I.]

BOHEMIAN LADY:

I would the milk thy mother gave thee when thou suck'dst her breast had been a little ratsbane!

[Shepherd, Henry VI Pt 1 Act V scene iv]

PRACTICAL JOKER to the audience:

They have a plentiful lack of wit.

[Hamlet, Hamlet Act II scene ii]

LEADING LADY to the PRACTICAL JOKER:

My cousin's a fool, and thou art another.

[Hero, Much Ado About Nothing Act III scene iv]

LEADING LADY to the **BOHEMIAN LADY**:

**A knave; a rascal; an eater of broken meats;
Base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy, worsted-stocking knave;
A lily-livered, action-taking knave, a whoreson, glass-gazing, super-serviceable finical rogue;
One-trunk-inheriting slave;
One that wouldst be a bawd, in way of good service,
And art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pandar,
and the daughter and heir of a mongrel ...**

[Kent, King Lear Act II scene ii. son and heir.]

During the LEADING LADY's preceding speech, the BOHEMIAN LADY, with her arms folded across her chest, tilts her head to and fro as if bored and mockingly moves her lips with the tirade. Then the BOHEMIAN LADY purposefully steals the last word.

BOHEMIAN LADY:

BITCH!

[Kent, King Lear Act II scene ii]

PRACTICAL JOKER to the audience:

Brevity is the soul of wit.

[Polonius, Hamlet Act II scene ii]

BOHEMIAN LADY to the **LEADING LADY**:

Well, breathe awhile, and then to it again:

And when thou hast tired thyself in base comparisons, hear me speak but this.

[Prince Henry, Henry IV Part 1 Act II scene iv]

Give me the crown!

[Richard II, Richard II Act IV scene i]

LEADING LADY dares the **BOHEMIAN LADY**:

Here, cousin, seize the crown!

[Richard II, Richard II Act IV scene i]

The BOHEMIAN LADY pulls off the LEADING LADY's crown. The LEADING LADY's red wig comes off too and reveals balding, white hair. The BOHEMIAN LADY is surprised that the LEADING LADY's wig came off with the crown and that the LEADING LADY has balding, white hair.

BOHEMIAN LADY holding the crown and red wig high:

Uneasy lies the head that wears ... a wig.

[Henry IV, King Henry IV Pt 2 Act III scene i. crown.]

How much more elder art thou than thy looks!

[Shylock, Merchant of Venice Act IV scene i]

Hence, rotten thing!

Or I shall shake thy bones out of thy garments.

[Coriolanus, Coriolanus Act III scene i]

LEADING LADY:

I do begin to have bloody thoughts.

[Stephano, The Tempest Act IV scene i]

She angrily grabs the axe from the chopping block stage left.

I have ground the axe myself.

[Helicanus, Pericles, Prince of Tyre Act I scene ii]

And where the offence is, let the great axe fall.

[King Claudius, Hamlet Act IV scene v]

The BOHEMIAN LADY drops the crown and red wig on the stage floor.

BOHEMIAN LADY *fearfully:*

Sorry, Juliet.

LEADING LADY *angrily:*

DAME! Juliet!

PRACTICAL JOKER, *raising his flask high, toasts:*

To DAMN Juliet.

The PRACTICAL JOKER takes a drink of whiskey from his flask. The PRACTICAL JOKER attempts to make light of the situation.

PRACTICAL JOKER *to the LEADING LADY jokingly:*

My gracious liege, this too much lenity and harmful pity must be laid aside.

[Clifford, Henry VI Pt 3 Act II scene ii]

The PRACTICAL JOKER realizes that the LEADING LADY's anger cannot be laughed off. The LEADING LADY, wielding the axe high above her head, chases the BOHEMIAN LADY and the PRACTICAL JOKER offstage left. The PRACTICAL JOKER flees in front of the BOHEMIAN LADY.

PRACTICAL JOKER *to the BOHEMIAN LADY as they flee:*

Get thee hence! Death and destruction dog thee at the heels.

[Queen Elizabeth, Richard III Act IV scene i]

The BOHEMIAN LADY, wielding the axe high above her head, chases the LEADING LADY and the PRACTICAL JOKER from offstage left to offstage right. The PRACTICAL JOKER flees in front of the LEADING LADY.

DIRECTOR *to the LEADING MAN:*

Let us make an honourable retreat.

[Touchstone, As You Like It Act III scene ii]

(1) The DIRECTOR and the LEADING MAN, carrying the scepter, flee offstage right in front of the PRACTICAL JOKER and the LEADING LADY.

(2) The LEADING LADY, wielding the axe high above her head, chases the DIRECTOR, the LEADING MAN, the PRACTICAL JOKER, and the BOHEMIAN LADY from offstage right toward centerstage. The BOHEMIAN LADY is only steps ahead of the LEADING LADY.

LEADING MAN *as they flee:*

I'll tell you who time gallops withal.

[Rosalind, As You Like It Act III scene ii]

The LEADING LADY and the BOHEMIAN LADY stop at centerstage and engage in a tug-of-war struggle for control of the axe.

PRACTICAL JOKER *as they flee:*

Go, hie thee, hie thee from this slaughter-house, lest thou increase the number of the dead.

[Queen Elizabeth, Richard III Act IV scene i]

The DIRECTOR, the LEADING MAN, and the PRACTICAL JOKER continue to run to stage left and stop near the stage left wing. The DIRECTOR, the LEADING MAN, and the PRACTICAL JOKER watch the struggle from stage left near the stage left wing. The DIRECTOR and the LEADING MAN are fearful. The PRACTICAL JOKER is gleeful.

LEADING LADY *struggling to hold onto the axe:*

A crown, or else a glorious tomb!

A sceptre, or an earthly sepulchre!

[York, Henry VI Pt 3 Act I scene iv]

The BOHEMIAN LADY grabs the axe from the LEADING LADY.

BOHEMIAN LADY *holding the axe high above her head:*

Villain, thy own hand yields thy death's instrument.

[Richard II, Richard II Act V scene v]

You put sharp weapons in a madman's hands.

[York, Henry VI Pt 2 Act III scene i]

A vengeance on your crafty wither'd hide!

[Tranio, The Taming of the Shrew Act IV scene v]

If it were done,

then 'twere well it were done quickly that this blow might be the be-all and the end-all here.

[Macbeth, Macbeth Act I scene vii]

(1) The BOHEMIAN LADY, wielding the axe high above her head, chases the LEADING LADY, the DIRECTOR, the LEADING MAN, and the PRACTICAL JOKER offstage left. The LEADING LADY is just steps ahead of the BOHEMIAN LADY.

(2) There are the sounds of a real-life fight between two alley cats followed by the mighty blow of an axe. There is a pause. The audience will wonder who has had their head chopped off.

(3) After the pause, the LEADING LADY victoriously enters stage left carrying a bloody axe.

LEADING LADY:

I have slain, that monstrous traitor!

She holds the bloody axe high.

Axe, I will hollow thee for this thy deed,

And hang thee o'er my tomb when I am dead:

Ne'er shall this blood be wiped from thy point;

But thou shalt wear it as a herald's coat.

[Idem, Henry VI Pt 2 Act IV scene x. sword.]

The stage lights go dark.

Stagehands remove the chopping block and axe. The LEADING LADY picks up and puts on her crown and red wig. The Elizabethan throne and floor cushions remain centerstage for the next scene.

SCENE 4
LOVE SCENE

Set: There is an Elizabethan throne centerstage. There are cushions on the floor on both sides of the throne.

Costumes:

The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth is wearing the crown and red wig again, but they are on crooked and the wig covers one eye. She does not hold the scepter in this scene. She has the LEADING MAN's eyeglasses in the bosom of her dress.

The PRACTICAL JOKER has padding inside the fool's cap to soften the blow of the lute being broken over his head.

The stage lights come up.

The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth is sitting on the throne. The LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley enters stage left, but he cannot see the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth from so far away without eyeglasses. He shields his eyes from the bright stage lights with his hand as he wanders about. The DIRECTOR and the PRACTICAL JOKER are offstage right. The BOHEMIAN LADY does not appear in this scene.

LEADING MAN *adlibbing:*

Dost thou play a game of hide-n-seek, my dove?

Where dost thou hide, my love?

I canst not find thee wit'out spectacles.

LEADING LADY, *frantically waving her arms above her head, adlibs:*

Yoo-hoo, you woo me o'er here, milord.

Wouldst thou make a spectacle of thyself?

The LEADING MAN follows the LEADING LADY's voice to her stage right side.

The LEADING LADY removes the LEADING MAN's eyeglasses from the bosom of her dress and hands the eyeglasses to the LEADING MAN.

The LEADING MAN puts on his eyeglasses and notices that the LEADING LADY's crown and wig are on crooked.

LEADING MAN *whispers:*

Your crown's awry;

I'll mend it, and then play.

[Charmian, Antony and Cleopatra Act V scene ii]

The LEADING MAN quickly straightens her crown and wig. The LEADING MAN without difficulty kneels on one knee on a cushion next to her right foot.

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley:

Wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?

[Titania, A Midsummer Night's Dream Act IV scene i]

Prithee, I wouldst desire music to woo you by.

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth looking offstage left:

Give me some music; music, moody food of us that trade in love.

[Cleopatra, Antony and Cleopatra Act II scene v]

Music, ho! music, such as charmeth lovers!

[Titania, A Midsummer Night's Dream Act IV scene i. sleep.]

Anon, fool, we desirest a love song.

Fool, fool, fool, I say!

[Malvolio, Twelfth Night Act IV scene ii]

The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth and the LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley look offstage left where the PRACTICAL JOKER/Court Jester is supposed to enter. The PRACTICAL JOKER is very drunk. The audience saw him drinking in the Opening Night Scene and the Beheading Scene. The DIRECTOR pushes the PRACTICAL JOKER on stage from the stage right wing. The PRACTICAL JOKER, carrying the lute, stumbles over to the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth and comically falls down on the floor cushions next to her left foot. The LEADING MAN and the LEADING LADY pretend nothing is wrong.

The PRACTICAL JOKER sings the wrong lyric out-of-tune and plays the lute badly by randomly plucking strings. The LEADING MAN and the LEADING LADY pretend nothing is wrong.

PRACTICAL JOKER sings boisterously:

**It was a lover and his ass,
With a hay, and a hoe, and a nay ninny no,
That o'er the green cornfield passed gas
In springtime, the only pretty ring time,
In bird droppings, hey ding-a-ling, dink:
Sweet lovers love to drink.**

*It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
That o'er the green cornfield did pass,
In springtime, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.*

**Very tall glasses of straight rye,
With a hey, and a oh, and a hey hyena oh**

[Pages' song, As You Like It Act V scene iii]

*Between the acres of the rye,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,*

PRACTICAL JOKER adlibbing:

Hey, oh, I'll drink to that.

The PRACTICAL JOKER removes a whiskey flask from his pocket, raises a toast to the audience, and takes a drink.

PRACTICAL JOKER:

Hiccup!

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth *ignoring the drunken singing:*

O, the heavenly harmony which that sweet tongue hath made.

[Marcus Andronicus, Titus Andronicus Act II scene iv]

Where, like a sweet melodious bird, it sung sweet varied notes, enchanting every ear!

[Marcus Andronicus, Titus Andronicus Act III scene i]

O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound, that breathes upon a bank of violets.

[Duke Orsino, Twelfth Night Act I scene i]

You sang that most prettily.

LEADING MAN *whispers to himself:*

Like a drunken sod.

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth *to the PRACTICAL JOKER/Court Jester:*

If music be the food of love play on.

[Duke Orsino, Twelfth Night Act I scene i]

The PRACTICAL JOKER/Court Jester plays the lute quietly, but badly, as mood music.

The LEADING LADY pretends nothing is wrong.

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

**O, how those lily hands tremble, like aspen-leaves, upon a lute,
and make the silken strings delight to kiss them.**

[Marcus, Titus Andronicus Act II scene iv]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth *to the LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley:*

I wouldst have thee recite a sonnet.

The LEADING MAN, distracted by the PRACTICAL JOKER's bad playing, misquotes Sonnet 130 and recites humorous insulting lines of poetry. The LEADING LADY pretends not to notice the insults and pretends to be flattered.

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley *begins to recite a sonnet:*

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;

Coral is far more red than her pale lips;

Coral is far more red than her lip's red;

The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth daintily touches her lips.

PRACTICAL JOKER:

Hiccup!

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley continues the sonnet:

If snow be mounds of white, her breasts are hills of dung; *If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;*
If fair hair be spun gold, grey hairs grow on her tits; *If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.*

The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth daintily touches her chest.

PRACTICAL JOKER louder:

Hiccup!!

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley continues the sonnet:

I have seen roses damask'd, red and white, *I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,*
But no such roses see I in her cheeks; *But no such roses see I in her cheeks;*

The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth daintily touches her cheek.

PRACTICAL JOKER even louder:

Hiccup!!!

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley continues the sonnet:

And in any perfume there is more delight *And in some perfumes is there more delight*
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks. *Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.*

The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth with her mouth open exhales on the LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley. The LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley makes a sour face. The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth daintily puts her hand over her mouth embarrassed by her bad breath.

LEADING LADY:

Hiccup!

The LEADING LADY looks surprised by her hiccup.

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley continues the sonnet:

I love to hear her speak, yet well I know *I love to hear her speak, yet well I know*
That music hath a far more pleasing sound. *That music hath a far more pleasing sound.*

PRACTICAL JOKER very loudly:

BURP!!!

LEADING MAN:

That's it. Nobody burps during my love scene.

The LEADING MAN, still kneeling, grabs the lute from the PRACTICAL JOKER and breaks the lute over the PRACTICAL JOKER's head.

PRACTICAL JOKER adlibbing:

Nay, I shall ne'er be ware of mine own wit till I break my *shins* against it.

[Touchstone, As You Like It Act II scene iv]

The PRACTICAL JOKER rubs the top of his head on the word "shins."

LEADING LADY *adlibbing to the PRACTICAL JOKER:*

Enough; no more:

'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.

That strain. It had a dying fall.

[Orsino, Twelfth Night Act I scene i]

The PRACTICAL JOKER passes out. He falls over as if dead. Periodically, he comes to, says something funny, and passes out again.

LEADING LADY, *referring to the PRACTICAL JOKER, adlibs:*

Oh, woe is he!

[Ophelia, Hamlet Act III scene i. me.]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth *praising the LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley and the sonnet:*

O spirit of love! how quick and fresh art thou.

[Orsino, Twelfth Night Act I scene i]

O, wonderful, wonderful, and most wonderful wonderful!

and yet again wonderful, and after that out of all whooping.

[Celia, As You Like It Act III scene ii]

You may rise milord.

The LEADING MAN tries comically to stand up, but he can't.

LEADING MAN *adlibbing:*

Perforce I canst not. I hath leg cramp.

LEADING LADY *adlibbing:*

Frailty, thy name is man.

[Hamlet, Hamlet Act I scene ii. woman.]

LEADING MAN:

Give me a hand.

The LEADING LADY gets off the throne and helps the LEADING MAN to stand. The LEADING LADY remains standing. The PRACTICAL JOKER comes to and applauds.

PRACTICAL JOKER *applauding:*

Bravo, bravo! Is the play over already?

Author, author!

The LEADING MAN and the LEADING LADY give the PRACTICAL JOKER a disapproving look.

The PRACTICAL JOKER realizes his mistake and stops applauding. (The play is not over, and the author is obviously Shakespeare.) The LEADING MAN rubs his sore leg. The PRACTICAL JOKER sees the LEADING MAN rubbing his leg.

PRACTICAL JOKER:

Ay, there's the rub.

[Hamlet, Hamlet Act III scene i]

Hiccup!

The PRACTICAL JOKER passes out. The LEADING MAN and the LEADING LADY ignore him.

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth to the LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley:

A good leg will fall;

A straight back will stoop;

A black beard will turn white;

A curl'd pate will grow bald;

A fair face will wither;

A full eye will wax hollow:

But a good heart is the sun and the moon;

Or ... or

[Henry V, Henry V Act V scene ii]

The LEADING LADY can't remember the rest of her speech.

DIRECTOR *whispers from the stage right wing:*

Or rather, the sun, and not the moon.

LEADING MAN *whispers to the LEADING LADY:*

What'd he say?

LEADING LADY *whispers to LEADING MAN:*

Something about the sun and moon.

The LEADING MAN thinks for a moment and then recites Romeo's speech from the balcony scene, Romeo and Juliet Act II scene ii, because the speech refers to the sun and the moon, and the balcony scene is a love scene. The LEADING MAN played Romeo in his youth.

LEADING MAN:

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?

It is the East, and

He pauses to think.

Elizabeth ...

LEADING LADY *interrupts without hesitation and out of habit:*

Queen! Elizabeth.

The LEADING LADY, realizing her mistake, quickly covers her mouth. (The LEADING LADY corrected the DIRECTOR in the Opening Night Scene and the BOHEMIAN LADY in the Beheading Scene.)

LEADING MAN *continues without hesitation:*

is the sun.

**Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
who is already sick and pale with grief
that thou, her maid, art far more fair than she.**

Be not her maid, since she is envious.

**Her vestal livery is but sick and green,
and none but fools do wear it. Cast it off.**

It is my lady! O, it is my love!

O, that she knew she were!

DIRECTOR *whispers from the stage right wing:*

Wrong speech.

The LEADING MAN is hard-of-hearing. He can't understand what the DIRECTOR said. The LEADING MAN cups his right hand around his right ear and looks offstage right at the DIRECTOR.

LEADING MAN:

He speaks, yet he says nothing. What of that?

His eye discourses; I will answer it.

I am too bold; 'tis not to me he speaks.

LEADING LADY *adlibbing to the LEADING MAN:*

Pray continue, milord.

The PRACTICAL JOKER comes to and watches the LEADING MAN's speech. The PRACTICAL JOKER becomes perplexed.

LEADING MAN *looking into the LEADING LADY's eyes:*

**Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven having some business,
do entreat her eyes to twinkle in their spheres till they return.**

What if her eyes were in heaven, and the stars in her head?

The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars as daylight doth a lamp;

**Her eyes in heaven would through the airy region stream so bright
that birds would sing and think it were not night.**

PRACTICAL JOKER *to the audience:*

How now, am I in the wrong play?

The PRACTICAL JOKER passes out. The LEADING MAN and the LEADING LADY ignore him. The LEADING LADY leans her cheek upon her hand.

LEADING MAN *continues:*

See how she leans her cheek upon her hand!

O, that I were a glove upon that hand, that I might touch that cheek!

DIRECTOR *frustrated shouts from the stage right wing:*

Wrong Speech!

LEADING LADY *whispers to the LEADING MAN:*

Keep calm and carry on.

[This phrase is a British World War II slogan.]

LEADING MAN *loudly to the DIRECTOR offstage right:*

O, speak again, bright angel!

For thou art as glorious to this *Opening Night*, being o'er my head,

as is a winged messenger of heaven unto the white, upturn-ed, wondering eyes of mortals

He gestures to the audience.

that fall back to gaze on him when he bestrides the lazy-puffing clouds and sails upon the bosom of the air.

The LEADING LADY's eyes light up. She remembers her lines.

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,

And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,

Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,

No son of mine succeeding.

[Macbeth, Macbeth Act III scene i]

LEADING MAN *adlibbing in French:*

Apres vous, le deluge.

[Louis XV said, "Apres moi, le deluge."]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth agreeing:

By my troth and maidenhead.

[Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII Act II scene iii]

I, a virgin flower, must grow alone unplucked.

[Emilia, Two Noble Kinsmen Act V scene i]

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley remembers his line:

Earthlier happy is the rose distill'd than that, which, withering on the virgin thorn,

grows, lives, and dies, in single blessedness.

[Theseus, A Midsummer Night's Dream Act I scene i]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord, ere I will my virgin patent up.

[Hermia, A Midsummer Night's Dream Act I scene i]

If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste as Diana.

[Portia, The Merchant of Venice Act I scene ii]

The PRACTICAL JOKER comes to.

PRACTICAL JOKER *interjects:*

Your old virginity is like one of our French withered pears: it looks ill, it eats drily.

[Parolles, All's Well That Ends Well Act I scene i]

The LEADING LADY can no longer ignore the PRACTICAL JOKER.

LEADING LADY:

Me, withered?!

PRACTICAL JOKER:

Withered like an old apple-john.

[Falstaff, Henry IV Pt 1 Act III scene ii]

LEADING LADY:

Yet again, with "withered!"

PRACTICAL JOKER:

Yet you are wither'd.

[Katharina, The Taming of the Shrew Act II scene i]

Old, cold, withered and of intolerable entrails.

[Master Page, Merry Wives of Windsor Act V scene v]

LEADING LADY *complains to the LEADING MAN:*

He hath called me thrice withered!

PRACTICAL JOKER:

Actually, four times if you're counting.

Hiccup!

The PRACTICAL JOKER passes out.

LEADING LADY *complains to the LEADING MAN:*

He is deformed, crooked, old and sere,

Ill-faced, worse bodied, shapeless everywhere;

Vicious, ungentle, foolish, blunt, unkind;

Stigmatical in making, worse in mind.

[Adriana, The Comedy of Errors Act IV scene ii]

The PRACTICAL JOKER comes to.

PRACTICAL JOKER:

Now tell me what you really think, O Queen of the Banshees.

Hiccup!

The PRACTICAL JOKER passes out. The LEADING LADY, angry and frustrated, stamps her foot.

LEADING LADY *adlibbing to the unconscious PRACTICAL JOKER:*

'Sblood, you starveling, you elf-skin, you dried neat's tongue, you bull's pizzle, you stock-fish!

[Falstaff, Henry IV Pt 1 Act II scene iv]

The PRACTICAL JOKER comes to.

PRACTICAL JOKER:

Flattery wilt get thee nowhere.

LEADING LADY *adlibbing:*

O for breath to utter what is like thee!

[Falstaff, Henry IV Pt 1 Act II scene iv]

PRACTICAL JOKER *blowing:*

Raspberry!

The PRACTICAL JOKER passes out.

LEADING LADY *furios:*

Tongue nor heart cannot conceive nor name thee!

[Macduff, Macbeth Act II scene iii]

So SOD OFF, you bloody fool!

[Originally, "bloody" was a contraction of "by our lady."]

The LEADING LADY has an immediate change of tone when she returns her attention to the LEADING MAN and to her character of Queen Elizabeth.

LEADING LADY *to the LEADING MAN apologetically:*

Pardon my French.

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth *cooing lovingly to the LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley:*

Wilt thou accompany me and take a turn about the garden?

[Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen: "take a turn about the room."]

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley *romantically:*

'Tis a full moon tonight.

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth *winks*:

Marry, I knowest.

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley *giddily*:

**Whispering nothings, leaning cheek to cheek, meeting noses,
horsing foot on foot, and kissing with inside lip.**

[Leontes, A Winter's Tale Act I scene ii. Is whispering nothing? Is leaning cheek to cheek? Is meeting noses? Kissing with inside lip? Horsing foot on foot?]

The PRACTICAL JOKER comes to.

PRACTICAL JOKER:

A good snog!

Hiccup!

The LEADING MAN can no longer ignore him.

LEADING MAN *adlibbing*:

**Why, he is the Queen's jester: a very dull fool;
Only his gift is in devising impossible slanders:
None but libertines delight in him;
And the commendation is not in his wit, but in his villany;
For he both pleases men and angers them,
and then they laugh at him and beat him.**

[Beatrice, Much Ado About Nothing Act II scene i. prince's.]

The LEADING MAN shakes his fist at the PRACTICAL JOKER.

PRACTICAL JOKER *adlibbing*:

Go n-ithe an cat thú is go n-ithe an diabhal an cat.

[Irish for "May the cat eat you, and may the devil eat the cat," meaning "May the devil take you."]

LEADING MAN:

What does that mean in English?

PRACTICAL JOKER:

The same as it does in Irish.

The PRACTICAL JOKER passes out.

LEADING MAN *adlibbing*:

Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool nowhere but in 's own house.

[Hamlet, Hamlet Act III scene i]

LEADING LADY *to the LEADING MAN:*

Away before me to sweet beds of flowers:

Love-thoughts lie rich when canopied with bowers.

[Orsino, Twelfth Night Act I scene i]

The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth and the LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley exit stage left arm-in-arm. The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth is downstage of the LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley.

The stage lights go dark to signal to the audience the end of the scene.

PRACTICAL JOKER *in the dark:*

Hey, who turned out the lights?

The PRACTICAL JOKER exits stage left in the dark.

Stagehands remove the Elizabethan throne, floor cushions, and broken lute.

SCENE 5
GHOST SCENE

Set: There is a full moon upstage center.

Costume:

The BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots appears to be headless. She carries a dummy head in her downstage hand. She wears a totally white version of the black dress in the Blair execution portrait. The white ruff is stained with blood. She wears a black hood over her head so that she appears to be headless to the audience. Inadvertently, she cannot see through the black hood. The dummy head she carries wears white face powder and a white powdered wig. There are blood stains around the neck of the dummy head. The powder gets in the BOHEMIAN LADY's nose and mouth causing her to sneeze, cough, and choke throughout the scene. Whenever she sneezes, she jerks the dummy head so that it appears that the dummy head is the source of the sneeze. Jerking the dummy head causes more powder to fill the air. The preceding Love Scene gave the BOHEMIAN LADY time to change into the Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots costume.

Alternative costume: To save money on costumes, the BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots continues to wear the black dress in the Blair execution portrait, except that the white ruff is now stained with blood.

Stagehands bring a full moon to upstage center.

The stage lights come up.

The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth and the LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley enter stage left. They walk arm-in-arm as if they have just left the throne room in the preceding Love Scene. The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth is downstage of the LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley. They stop centerstage. The BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots and the DIRECTOR are offstage right. The PRACTICAL JOKER is offstage left.

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

This garden has a world of pleasures in 't.

[Emilia, Two Noble Kinsmen Act II scene ii]

I like this place, and willingly could waste my time in it.

[Celia, As You Like It Act II scene iv]

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley:

This castle hath a pleasant seat.

[Duncan, Macbeth Act I scene vi]

The climate's delicate, the air most sweet.

[Cleomenes, A Winter's Tale Act III scene iii]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

The air nimbly and sweetly recommends itself unto our gentle senses.

[Duncan, Macbeth Act I scene vi]

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley:

The heaven's breath smells wooingly here.

[Banquo, Macbeth Act I scene vi]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

Good Lord, how bright and goodly shines the moon!

[Petruccio, Taming of the Shrew Act IV scene v]

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley:

Look how the floor of heaven is thick inlaid with patines of bright silver.

[Lorenzo, The Merchant of Venice Act V scene i. gold.]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

**In such a night as this, when the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees and they did make no noise,
in such a night Troilus methinks mounted the Troyan walls
and sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents, where Cressid lay that night.**

[Lorenzo, Merchant of Venice Act V scene i]

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley:

**In such a night stood Dido with a willow in her hand upon the wild sea banks
and waft her love to come again to Carthage.**

[Lorenzo, Merchant of Venice Act V scene i]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

**In such a night did young Robert swear he loved me well, stealing my soul with many vows of faith
and ne'er a true one.**

[Jessica, Merchant of Venice Act V scene i. Lorenzo, her.]

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley:

**In such a night did pretty Elizabeth, like a little shrew, slander her love,
and he forgave it her.**

[Lorenzo, Merchant of Venice Act V scene i. Jessica.]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

**I would out-night you, did no body come;
But, hark, I hear the footing of a man.**

[Jessica, Merchant of Venice Act V scene i]

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley:

Who comes so fast in silence of the night?

[Lorenzo, Merchant of Venice Act V scene i]

There is the sound of Big Ben striking one o'clock in the morning. (The Ghost of Hamlet's father appeared at one o'clock in the morning.)

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth apprehensively:

**Now it is the time of night
that the graves all gaping wide,
every one lets forth his sprite,
in the church-way paths to glide.**

[Puck, A Midsummer Night's Dream Act V scene i]

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley apprehensively:

**'Tis now the very witching time of night,
when churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out contagion to this world.**

[Hamlet, Hamlet Act III scene ii]

BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots hauntingly from offstage right:

**Hear it not, Elizabeth; for it is a knell
that summons thee to heaven or to hell.**

[Macbeth, Macbeth Act II scene i. Duncan.]

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley apprehensively:

**Deep night, dark night, the silent of the night,
The time when screech-owls cry and ban-dogs howl,
And spirits walk and ghosts break up their graves.**

[Bolingbroke, Henry VI Pt 2 Act I scene iv]

The BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots enters stage right in a cloud of white powder. She remains stage right. She is headless. She holds in her downstage hand the dummy head by the hair. She cannot see where she is going because of the black hood over her head and eyes. She is choking on the powder. (Ghosts appear in many Shakespeare plays, Hamlet, Macbeth, Richard III, and Julius Caesar.)

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

Ha! who comes here?

I think it is the weakness of mine eyes that shapes this monstrous apparition.

It comes upon me.

Art thou any thing?

Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil, that makest my blood cold and my hair to stare?

Speak to me what thou art.

[Brutus, Julius Caesar Act IV scene iii]

BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots hauntingly:

In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.

[The last words of Mary Queen of Scots, meaning "Into thy hands, Lord, I commend my spirit."]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

O, look! methinks I see my cousin's ghost.

[Juliet, Romeo and Juliet Act IV scene iii]

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley:

O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

[Horatio, Hamlet Act I scene v]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth:

Stands not within the prospect of belief.

[Macbeth, Macbeth Act I scene iii]

She should in ground unsanctified have lodged till the last trumpet.

[First Priest, Hamlet Act V scene i]

BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots hauntingly:

En ma fin est mon commencement.

[A French phrase embroidered on the cloth of state of Mary Queen of Scots, meaning "In my end lies my beginning."]

LEADING MAN adlibbing in French:

O mon dieu!

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth to the BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots:

Angels and ministers of grace, defend us!

Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,

Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,

Be thy intents wicked or charitable,

Thou comest in such a questionable shape that I will speak to thee:

I'll call thee Mary, Queen, cousin, royal Scot: O, answer me!

[Hamlet, Hamlet Act I scene iv. Hamlet, King, Father, royal Dane.]

BOHEMIAN LADY:

Sneeze!

The BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots jerks the dummy head so that it appears that the dummy head is the source of the sneeze. More powder fills the air.

LEADING MAN adlibbing:

How canst she sneeze? Her nose holes be not connected to her windbags.

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth to the BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots:

Let me not burst in ignorance,

but tell why thy canonized bones, hearsed in death, have burst their cerements;

Why the sepulchre, wherein we saw thee quietly inurn'd,
hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws to cast thee up again.
What may this mean, that thou, dead corse, again in complete dress
revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon, making night hideous, and we fools of nature,
so horridly to shake our disposition with thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?

[Hamlet, Hamlet Act I scene iv. in complete steel.]

BOHEMIAN LADY *loudly*:

Sneeze!

The BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots jerks the dummy head so that it appears that the dummy head is the source of the sneeze. More powder fills the air.

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley:

She sneezes!

He quickly corrects himself.

She speaks!

[Romeo, Romeo and Juliet Act II scene ii]

The BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots walks very, very slowly toward centerstage during the following speech.

BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots *choking on the powder*:

I am thy cousin's spirit;

Doomed for a certain term to cough, *she coughs*, walk the night,
and for the day confined to gasp, *she gasps for breath*, fast in fires,
till the foul crimes done in my days of nature are burnt and purged away.

But that I am forbid to tell the secrets of my prison-house, I could a tale unfold,
whose lightest word would harrow up thy soul,
sneeze, *she sneezes*, freeze thy old blood,

make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,
thy knotted and combined locks to part

and each particular hair to stand on end, like quills upon the fretful porpentine:

But this eternal blazon must not be to ears of flesh and blood. --

List, list, O, list!

[Ghost of Hamlet's father, Hamlet Act I scene v. thy father's spirit.]

During the preceding speech, the PRACTICAL JOKER enters stage left drunk and stumbling. By the end of the speech, he has crossed to the BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots.

PRACTICAL JOKER *adlibbing*:

Nay, you list.

The PRACTICAL JOKER blows more powder in her face as a practical joke.

BOHEMIAN LADY *loudly*:
Sneeze!

The BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots jerks the dummy head so that it appears that the dummy head is the source of the sneeze. More powder fills the air.

PRACTICAL JOKER *adlibbing*:
A plague o' both your houses!

[Mercutio, Romeo and Juliet Act III scene i. "Both your houses" refers to the Tudors and the Stuarts, and not the Capulets and Montagues.]

The PRACTICAL JOKER points to both the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth and the BOHEMIAN LADY/Mary Queen of Scots. Then he stumbles toward stage left.

BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots *choking*:

Oh, horrible, oh, horrible, most horrible!

[Ghost of Hamlet's father, Hamlet Act I scene v]

Murder most foul.

[Ghost of Hamlet's father, Hamlet Act I scene v]

Phew!

When the BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots sneezes, it sounds like "phew," a response to a foul, disgusting smell. The BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots jerks the dummy head so that it appears that the dummy head is the source of the sneeze. More powder fills the air.

PRACTICAL JOKER *adlibbing*:

Fair is foul, and foul is fair.

[Three Witches, Macbeth Act I scene i]

The PRACTICAL JOKER exits stage left.

BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots *choking to the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth*:

Foul devil,

If thou delight to view thy heinous deeds,

behold this pattern of thy butcheries.

O, see, sneeze, she sneezes, see!

Dead Mary's head opens her congeal'd mouth and sneezes, she sneezes, bleeds afresh!

[Lady Anne, Richard III Act I scene ii. Henry's wounds open their congeal'd mouths.]

The BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots jerks the dummy head so that it appears that the dummy head is the source of the sneeze. More powder fills the air.

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth *distraught*:

I am afraid to think what I have done;
Look on't again I dare not.

[Macbeth, Macbeth Act II scene ii]

The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth turns her face away.

BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots choking:

Blush, she sneezes, Blush, she coughs;

**For 'tis thy presence that exhales this blood from cold and empty veins, where no blood dwells;
Thy deed, inhuman and unnatural, provokes this deluge most unnatural.**

[Lady Anne, Richard III Act I scene ii]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth distraught:

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven.

A cousin's murder.

[King Claudius, Hamlet Act III scene iii. A brother's murder.]

The dust from the powder settles down so that the BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots can deliver speeches.

BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots not choking:

O God, which my blood madest, revenge my death!

O earth, which my blood drink'st revenge my death!

Either heaven with lightning strike the murderer dead,

Or earth, gape open wide and eat her quick!

[Lady Anne, Richard III Act I scene ii. this, his, him.]

And now the house of Stuart,

thrust from the crown by shameful murder of a guiltless queen burns with revenging fire;

whose hopeful colours advance under the which is writ "Virescit Vulnere Virtus."

[Captain, Henry VI Pt 2 Act IV scene i. York, king, "Invitis nubilus."

The House of Stuart motto: "Courage grows strong at a wound."]

If I digg'd up thy forefathers' graves and hung their rotten coffins up in chains,

it could not slake mine ire, nor ease my heart.

The sight of any of the house of Tudor is as a fury to torment my soul;

And till I root out their accursed line and leave not one alive, I live in hell.

[Clifford, Henry VI Pt 3 Act I scene iii. York.]

Be thou a prey unto the house of Stuart.

[Westmoreland, Henry VI Pt 3 Act I scene i. York.]

Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood!

[Marc Antony, Julius Caesar Act III scene i]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth distraught:

How fain, like Pilate, would I wash my hands of this most grievous guilty murder done!

[Second Murderer, Richard III Act I scene iv]

She looks at her right hand.

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?

No, this my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red.

[Macbeth, Macbeth Act II scene ii]

**What if this cursed hand were thicker than itself with cousin's blood?
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens to wash it white as snow?**

She looks up to God in heaven.

Then I'll look up.

Forgive me my foul murder.

[King Claudius, Hamlet Act III scene iii. brother's blood.]

BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots *not choking*:

O most pernicious woman!

O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!

[Hamlet, Hamlet Act I scene v]

**There is no sure foundation set on blood,
No certain life achieved by others' death.**

[King John, King John Act IV scene ii]

Blood will have blood.

[Macbeth, Macbeth Act III scene iv]

**Bloody thou art and bloody will be thy end.
Shame serves thy life and doth thy death attend.**

[Duchess of York, Richard III Act IV scene iv]

**No funeral rite, nor man in mourning weeds,
No mournful bell shall ring your burial;
But throw you forth to beasts and birds of prey:
Your life was beast-like, and devoid of pity;
And, being so, shall have like want of pity.**

[Lucius, Titus Andronicus Act V scene iii]

Despair, and die!

[Ghosts, Richard III Act V scene iii]

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth *looking up to the angels in heaven*:

Save me and hover o'er me with your wings, you heavenly guards!

[Hamlet, Hamlet Act III scene iv]

Come, you spirits that tend on mortal thoughts!

Unsex me here,

And fill me from the crown to the toe top full of direst cruelty;

Make thick my blood,

Stop up the access and passage to remorse.

[Lady Macbeth, Macbeth Act I scene v]

BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots *not choking*:

Confess yourself to heaven;

Repent what's past; avoid what is to come.

[Hamlet, Hamlet Act III scene iv]

The BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots reaches out with both hands to attack the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth. The LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley cowardly clings to the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth.

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley:
Beshrew my eyes!

The BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots cannot see where she is going and walks in the wrong direction away from the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth.

BOHEMIAN LADY adlibbing:
Beshrew my hood! I canst not see where I go'st.
["Go'st" sounds like "ghost."]
What devil was't that thus hath cozen'd me at hoodman-blind?
[Hamlet, Hamlet Act III scene iv. you.]

LEADING LADY adlibbing to the LEADING MAN:
Hoodwink'd,
[Caius Lucius, Cymbeline Act V scene ii]
her eyesight is worse than yours.

BOHEMIAN LADY forcefully:
SNEEZE!

This sneeze is the loudest in the scene. The force of the sneeze causes the BOHEMIAN LADY to accidentally drop the dummy head. She kneels and reaches around the stage floor searching for the dummy head, but she cannot find it. (In reality, when the executioner chopped off Mary Queen of Scots' head, he picked up her head by the hair. The executioner did not realize that he was holding onto a wig. The head became detached from the wig, and the head dropped to the floor.)

Simultaneously, the force of the sneeze startles the LEADING MAN and causes him to knock off his eyeglasses. He kneels and reaches around the stage floor searching for his eyeglasses, but he cannot find them.

BOHEMIAN LADY adlibbing:
I lost my head!

LEADING LADY adlibbing:
To lose one head may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose two looks like carelessness.
[Lady Bracknell, The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde: "To lose one parent, Mr. Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness." Or she says, "Twice in one day show'st want of care."]

The LEADING LADY kicks the dummy head out of reach of the BOHEMIAN LADY.

The LEADING MAN and the BOHEMIAN LADY comically bump heads while crawling around the stage floor.

The LEADING LADY picks up the LEADING MAN's eyeglasses, taps him on the shoulder, and gives him his eyeglasses.

The LEADING MAN rises and puts on his eyeglasses. He wears his eyeglasses for the remainder of the play.

The BOHEMIAN LADY rises without finding her head. She reaches with both hands to attack the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth, but she walks in the wrong direction away from the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth.

LEADING MAN *adlibbing:*

The ghost go'st the wrong way.

She hath not a ghost of a chance of finding us wit'out her head.

["Go'st" sounds like "ghost."]

The DIRECTOR discreetly enters stage right on tiptoes, shielding his face from the audience with his downstage hand. The DIRECTOR picks up the dummy head, hands it to the BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scot, turns her in the direction of the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth, and gives her a gentle push forward. The DIRECTOR then exits stage right on tiptoes, shielding his face from the audience with his downstage hand.

The BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots angrily beats her chest as she approaches the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth. Her chest beating stirs up more powder. The LEADING MAN and the LEADING LADY begin to choke and sneeze too. The LEADING MAN has a loud, manly sneeze. The LEADING LADY has a dainty, ladylike sneeze.

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth *choking:*

Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!

Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;

She looks into the eyes of the dummy head.

Thou hast no speculation in those eyes which thou dost glare with!

Hence, horrible shadow!

Unreal mockery, hence!

[Macbeth, Macbeth Act III scene iv]

Sneeze!

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley *choking:*

Mortal eyes cannot endure the devil.

Avaunt, thou dreadful minister of hell!

[Lady Anne, Richard III Act I scene ii]

Sneeze!

LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth choking:

Ghost unlaid forbear thee!

[Guiderius, Cymbeline Act IV scene ii]

Sneeze!

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley choking:

Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!

[Hamlet, Hamlet Act I scene v]

Sneeze!

The BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots is now very close to the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth and the LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley. She holds the dummy head eye-to-eye in the face of the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth.

BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots choking:

If e'er those eyes of yours behold another day break in the east:

But even this night, whose black contagious breath already smokes

about the burning crest of the old, feeble and day-wearied sun,

Even this ill night, your breathing shall expire,

paying the fine of rated treachery even with a treacherous fine of both your lives.

[Melun, King John Act V scene iv. all your lives.]

Breathe foul contagious darkness in the air.

[Captain, Henry VI Pt 2 Act IV scene i]

Dream on, dream on, of bloody deeds and death:

Fainting, despair; despairing, yield thy breath.

[Ghost of Buckingham, Richard III Act V scene iii]

LEADING LADY adlibbing while choking:

I canst not breathe!

Cough!

BOHEMIAN LADY adlibbing while choking:

Nor I!

Cough!

LEADING MAN adlibbing while choking:

Nor I!

Cough!

The LEADING MAN holds his hand over his mouth as he coughs. He has a set of false teeth concealed in his hand. The LEADING LADY slaps the LEADING MAN on the back to help him get his breath. The LEADING MAN throws the false teeth down on the stage floor. It appears as though the LEADING LADY has knocked out his false teeth.

LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley *mumbling as he tries to speak without his false teeth:*

O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted. Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help!

[Quince, A Midsummer Night's Dream Act III scene i]

The LEADING MAN quickly picks up the false teeth. The LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth and the LEADING MAN/Robert Dudley, both coughing and sneezing, exit stage left fleeing.

LEADING LADY *adlibbing while fleeing:*

I should have had her cremated.

The BOHEMIAN LADY/Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots, coughing and sneezing, exits stage left following in pursuit.

The stage lights go dark.

Stagehands remove the full moon.

SCENE 6
MAD SCENE

Set: There is no set for this scene.

Costumes: All the costumes appear to be improvised at the last minute because these speeches were not planned in advance. It is as if the costumes and props were hastily found backstage.

The LEADING MAN as Hamlet still wears his Elizabethan court costume. He has put his false teeth back in. Therefore, he speaks normally.

The LEADING MAN as Richard III still wears his Elizabethan court costume. He also wears a hump on his back under a cape and carries a long sword. The Ophelia and Queen Gertrude speeches give him time to change into this costume.

The LEADING LADY as Juliet still wears her Queen Elizabeth costume, including the red wig and crown.

The LEADING LADY as Ophelia still wears her Queen Elizabeth costume. However, she no longer wears the red wig and crown. She wears flower garlands in her hair and around her neck. She carries a basket of flowers. The King Lear speeches give her time to change into this costume.

The BOHEMIAN LADY as King Lear still wears her Ghost of Mary Queen of Scots costume, but without the black hood, the bloody ruff, and the dummy head. The Hamlet-Juliet conversation gives her time to change into this costume. As Lady Macbeth, she wears the black dress in the Blair execution portrait, but without a white ruff and white cuffs. She does not wear the white lace cap, the long veil, and the crucifix. She carries a lighted candle. The Ophelia and Queen Gertrude speeches give her time to change into this costume.

The PRACTICAL JOKER as Queen Gertrude still wears his Elizabethan court jester costume. He also wears the LEADING LADY/Queen Elizabeth's red wig and crown. The Ophelia speech gives him time to change into this costume. As Nick Bottom, he wears the head of a jackass and a coronet of musk roses. The Richard III-Lady Macbeth conversation gives him time to change into this costume.

Scene Summary: The LEADING MAN, the LEADING LADY, and the BOHEMIAN LADY get confused near the end of the play and fall back on speeches that they remember from past performances. The PRACTICAL JOKER is not confused, but he gleefully joins in the confusion.

The LEADING MAN recites Hamlet's "To be or not to be" speech because he played Hamlet in his youth. He recites from Richard III because he played Richard III in the distant past. He walks with a hunch back and a limp while he recites Richard III. Also, he recites from King Lear because he always wanted to play King Lear.

The LEADING LADY recites Juliet's "Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou" speech from Romeo and Juliet because she played Juliet in her youth. She alters the speech to try to fit in with the LEADING MAN's "To be or not to be" speech. Also, she recites from Ophelia's mad scene in Hamlet because she played Ophelia in her youth. She walks strewing flowers while she recites Ophelia.

The BOHEMIAN LADY recites Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking speech from Macbeth because she played Lady Macbeth in the distant past. She sleepwalks carrying a lighted candle while she recites Lady Macbeth. Also, she recites from King Lear because she always wanted to play King Lear.

The PRACTICAL JOKER recites from A Midsummer Night's Dream because he played Nick Bottom in the distant past. He wears the head of a jackass and a coronet of musk roses while he recites Nick Bottom.

The stage lights come up.

The LEADING MAN and the LEADING LADY are centerstage standing close together face-to-face and holding both of each other's hands. The LEADING MAN is right of centerstage. The LEADING LADY is left of centerstage. The DIRECTOR is offstage right. The BOHEMIAN LADY and the PRACTICAL JOKER are offstage left.

The LEADING LADY looks at the LEADING MAN and nods to him because he has the first line in the scene. But the LEADING MAN has forgotten his line.

LEADING LADY *urges quietly:*

Speak, 'tis your cue.

[Beatrice, Much Ado About Nothing Act II scene i]

LEADING MAN *nervously:*

Uh ... uh

LEADING MAN *whispers to the DIRECTOR in the stage right wing:*

Give me the line.

DIRECTOR *whispers to the LEADING MAN from the stage right wing:*

I'd rather give you the hook.

The LEADING MAN is hard-of-hearing and cannot understand the DIRECTOR. The LEADING MAN cups his right hand around his right ear and leans toward the DIRECTOR.

LEADING LADY *whispers to the LEADING MAN:*

"The true beginning of our end."

[Quince, A Midsummer Night's Dream Act V scene i]

The preceding line signals to the audience that this scene will be the last scene in the play.

LEADING MAN *whispers to the LEADING LADY:*
You're telling me.

DIRECTOR, *frustrated, prompts shouting:*
Your line is, "The true beginning of our end!"
[Quince, A Midsummer Night's Dream Act V scene i]

LEADING MAN *whispers to the DIRECTOR:*
Not so loud. The audience will hear you.

LEADING MAN *whispers to the LEADING LADY:*
I can't remember my lines.

The PRACTICAL JOKER briefly sticks his head out from the stage left wing.

PRACTICAL JOKER *whispers:*
Recite a speech you can remember. The audience won't know the difference.

It appears as though the LEADING MAN and the LEADING LADY are having a scripted, coherent conversation, but they are actually reciting speeches from two different plays that they have played together in their youth. The LEADING MAN recites the "To be or not to be" speech from Hamlet Act III scene i. The LEADING LADY recites the "Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou" speech from Romeo and Juliet Act II scene ii. The LEADING LADY changes the words of her speech to try to make it fit with the LEADING MAN's speech. Both overact out of nervousness.

LEADING MAN/Hamlet:
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?

The LEADING MAN looks at the LEADING LADY. He wants her to speak.

LEADING LADY/Juliet:
Oh ... oh ...

She pauses to think.

O Hamlet, Hamlet! wherefore art thou Hamlet? O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father's ghost and refuse thy uncle Dane; *Deny thy father and refuse thy name;*
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, *Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,*
and I'll no longer be ... oh ... *and I'll no longer be a Capulet.*

She pauses to think.

Ophelia.

["Thy uncle Dane" refers to Hamlet's usurping uncle, King Claudius.]

The LEADING LADY looks at the LEADING MAN. She wants him to speak.

LEADING MAN/Hamlet:

To die: to sleep; No more;

**And by a sleep to say we end the heartache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to, --
'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished.**

LEADING LADY/Juliet:

**'Tis but thy uncle Dane that is thy enemy;
Thou art thyself, though not Hamlet.
What's Hamlet?**

**It is nor hand, nor foot, nor arm, nor face,
nor any other part belonging to a man.**

*'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague?*

*It is nor hand, nor foot, nor arm, nor face,
nor any other part belonging to a man.*

LEADING MAN/Hamlet:

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

**For in that sleep of death what dreams may come, when we have shuffled off this mortal coil, must
give us pause.**

LEADING LADY/Juliet:

**O, be some other Dane! What's in a name?
That which you call uncle
by any other word would smell as ...**

She pauses to think.

as rotten as the state of Denmark.

*O, be some other name! What's in a name?
That which we call a rose
by any other word would smell as sweet.*

LEADING MAN/Hamlet:

**There's the respect that makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear
the whips and scorns of time,
the oppressor's wrong,
the proud man's contumely,
the pangs of despised love,
the law's delay,
the insolence of office
and the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes,
when he himself might his quietus make with a bare bodkin?**

LEADING LADY *whispers to the LEADING MAN:*

What does "quietus with a bodkin" mean?

LEADING MAN *whispers:*

Beats me.

DIRECTOR *whispers from the stage right wing:*

I'd like to beat you.

It means he could kill himself with a dagger.

The DIRECTOR enters stage right and plunges an imaginary dagger into his own heart because he is very upset about the way the play is going. The DIRECTOR exits stage right still holding the imaginary dagger in his chest. The DIRECTOR staggers and pretends to be dying.

The PRACTICAL JOKER briefly sticks his head out from the stage left wing. On "DIE---rector," the PRACTICAL JOKER mockingly plunges an imaginary dagger into his own heart.

PRACTICAL JOKER *to the audience:*

Afterall, he is the DIE---rector.

LEADING LADY/Juliet *continues:*

**So Hamlet would, were he not Hamlet call'd,
retain that dear perfection**

which he owes without that title.

Damn it, Hamlet, doff thy uncle Dane,

And for that Dane which is no part of thee

Take all myself.

*So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
retain that dear perfection*

which he owes without that title.

Romeo, doff thy name,

And for that name which is no part of thee

Take all myself.

LEADING MAN/Hamlet:

Who would fardels bear?

The LEADING MAN and the LEADING LADY look confused offstage right.

DIRECTOR *whispers from the stage right wing:*

A fardel is a bundle. He is suffering under the weight of a heavy burden.

The DIRECTOR enters stage right and throws an imaginary heavy bundle over his shoulder onto his back and shakes his head in frustration.

DIRECTOR *to the audience:*

I know exactly how Hamlet felt.

The DIRECTOR exits stage right still carrying the imaginary heavy bundle.

LEADING MAN/Hamlet *continues:*

to grunt and sweat under a weary life,

He now understands the meaning.

Oh, I see now.

He continues.

**but that the dread of something after death,
the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns,
puzzles the will and makes us rather bear those ills we have
than *fly* to others that we know not of?**

The word “fly” makes the LEADING LADY think of the lark in Romeo and Juliet as an excuse to escape the Mad Scene.

LEADING LADY *nervously looking at the PRACTICAL JOKER in the stage left wing:*

Fly?

Hark, I hear the lark.

The PRACTICAL JOKER briefly sticks his head out from the stage left wing.

PRACTICAL JOKER *imitating a lark:*

Tweet, tweet, tweety-tweet.

LEADING LADY *to the LEADING MAN:*

I must bid thee farewell.

The LEADING LADY tries to let go of the LEADING MAN’s hands, but he will not let her go.

LEADING MAN:

It was the nightingale, and not the lark, that pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear.

[Juliet, Romeo and Juliet Act III scene v]

The PRACTICAL JOKER briefly sticks his head out from the stage left wing.

PRACTICAL JOKER *imitating an out-of-tune lark:*

Tweet, tweet, tweety-tweet!

LEADING LADY:

It is the lark that sings so out of tune, straining harsh discords and unpleasing sharps.

[Juliet, Romeo and Juliet Act III scene v]

LEADING MAN *to himself:*

He sounds more like an ostrich with strep throat.

LEADING MAN *whispers to the LEADING LADY:*

You’re not leaving me out here alone.

LEADING MAN *aloud to the LEADING LADY:*

Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

[Juliet, Romeo and Juliet Act III scene v]

LEADING MAN/Hamlet *continues*:

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;

He looks forcefully at the LEADING LADY on the word "cowards."

**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.**

LEADING LADY *nervously looking at the PRACTICAL JOKER in the stage left wing:*

My nurse calls from within.

The PRACTICAL JOKER briefly sticks his head out from the stage left wing.

PRACTICAL JOKER *imitating a matronly women's voice:*

Madam. Your lady mother is coming to your chamber.

[Nurse, Romeo and Juliet Act III scene v]

LEADING LADY *calls toward stage left:*

I come anon, good nurse!

[Juliet, Romeo and Juliet Act II scene ii]

LEADING LADY *to the LEADING MAN:*

A thousand times good night!

[Juliet, Romeo and Juliet Act II scene ii]

Farewell, farewell. One kiss, and I'll descend.

[Romeo, Romeo and Juliet Act III scene v]

The LEADING LADY kisses the LEADING MAN's hands. Then the LEADING LADY bites his hands which forces the LEADING MAN to release her.

LEADING LADY *whispers to the LEADING MAN:*

I give up. You're on your own.

The LEADING LADY gives the Windsor wave of the wrist to the LEADING MAN as she hurriedly exits stage left. The LEADING MAN is alone centerstage stupefied and doesn't know what to do next. Suddenly inspired, the LEADING MAN decides to play King Lear.

LEADING MAN *to himself:*

I always wanted to play King Lear.

The PRACTICAL JOKER briefly sticks his head out from the stage left wing.

PRACTICAL JOKER *to the LEADING MAN:*

Now's your chance. The show must go on.

LEADING MAN/King Lear:

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o' the world!
Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once
That make ingrateful man!

[King Lear, King Lear Act III scene ii]

The PRACTICAL JOKER briefly sticks his head out from the stage left wing.

PRACTICAL JOKER to the audience:

He's mad as the sea and wind when both contend which is the mightier.

[Queen Gertrude, Hamlet Act IV scene i]

The BOHEMIAN LADY standing in the stage left wing watches the confusion. Then she joins in. The BOHEMIAN LADY enters stage left and remains downstage left. The LEADING MAN addresses King Lear's mad speech to the audience house left. The BOHEMIAN LADY addresses King Lear's mad speech to the audience house right.

BOHEMIAN LADY:

I always wanted to play King Lear too.

LEADING MAN/King Lear continues:

Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! Spout, rain!
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:
I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
I never gave you kingdom, called you children,
You owe me no subscription: then, let fall
Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man.

[King Lear, King Lear Act III scene ii]

BOHEMIAN LADY/King Lear begins:

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o' the world!
Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once
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Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! Spout, rain!
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I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
I never gave you kingdom, called you children,
You owe me no subscription: then, let fall
Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man.

[King Lear, King Lear Act III scene ii]

The LEADING MAN and the BOHEMIAN LADY are not in sync. The LEADING MAN began the speech first. The BOHEMIAN LADY is far behind. When the LEADING MAN finishes reciting King Lear's mad speech, he exits stage right. When the BOHEMIAN LADY finishes reciting King Lear's mad speech, she exits stage left.

The PRACTICAL JOKER briefly sticks his head out from the stage left wing.

PRACTICAL JOKER *to the audience:*

Mad call I it, for, to define true madness, what is 't but to be nothing else but mad?

[Polonius, Hamlet Act II scene ii]

The DIRECTOR enters stage right and nervously tries to explain the situation to the audience.

DIRECTOR *reassuringly to the audience:*

Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't.

[Polonius, Hamlet Act II scene ii]

The DIRECTOR exits stage right frustrated.

Upon hearing the madness quotes, the LEADING LADY/Ophelia enacts Ophelia's mad scene in Hamlet Act IV scene v. The LEADING LADY/Ophelia enters stage left with flower garlands in her hair and around her neck. She carries a basket of flowers and strews the flowers on the stage floor. She played Ophelia in her youth.

LEADING LADY/Ophelia:

There's rosemary, that's for remembrance;

Pray, love, remember:

and there is pansies, that's for thoughts.

There's fennel for you, and columbines:

There's rue for you, and here's some for me:

We may call it herb of grace o' Sundays:

O, you must wear your rue with a difference.

There's a daisy: I would give you some violets,

but they withered all when my father died...

The BOHEMIAN LADY and the PRACTICAL JOKER briefly stick their heads out from the stage left wing to taunt the LEADING LADY.

BOHEMIAN LADY and PRACTICAL JOKER tauntingly interject:

Withered! Withered!

The LEADING LADY has gone mad and does not hear the taunts.

LEADING LADY/Ophelia continues:

They say he made a good end.

[Ophelia, Hamlet Act IV scene v]

The LEADING LADY/Ophelia falls to the stage floor centerstage and pretends to drown violently. The LEADING LADY/Ophelia sings very softly Ophelia's mad songs from Hamlet Act IV scene v as underscoring for the rest of the Mad Scene. For ease, the LEADING LADY/Ophelia may choose any verse from Hamlet Act IV scene v and sing it repeatedly until the end of the scene.

Upon seeing the LEADING LADY/Ophelia "drown," the PRACTICAL JOKER decides to get in on the fun and enters stage left and crosses to the upstage side of the "drowning" LEADING LADY/Ophelia. The PRACTICAL JOKER is still drunk, but he knows what he is doing -- having fun. He humorously imitates Queen Gertrude.

PRACTICAL JOKER/Queen Gertrude:

**There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
that shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;from another one?
There with fantastic garlands did she come
of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
that liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
but our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them:
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;
When down her weedy trophies and herself
fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
and, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up;
which time she chanted snatches of old lauds
as one incapable of her own distress,
or like a creature native and indued
unto the element. But long it could not be
till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay
to muddy death.**

[Queen Gertrude, Hamlet Act IV scene vii]

Lay her i' the earth;

**And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
may violets spring!**

[Laertes, Hamlet Act V scene i]

Sweets to the sweet: farewell!

[Queen Gertrude, Hamlet Act V scene i]

LEADING LADY/Ophelia singing very softly:

How should I your true love know

**By his cockle hat and staff,
and his sandal shoon.**

**He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone,**

**At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.**

**White his shroud as the mountain snow
Larded all with sweet flowers,
Which bewept to the ground did not go
With true-love showers.**

**Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.**

**Then up he rose, and donned his clothes,
And dugged the chamber door.**

**Let in the maid that out a maid
Never departed more.**

**By Gis and by Saint Charity,
Alack, and fie, for shame!**

Young men will do 't, if they come to 't.

By Cock, they are to blame.

**Quoth she, "Before you tumbled me,
You promised me to wed."**

He answers,

**"So would I ha' done, by yonder sun,
An thou hadst not come to my bed."**

The PRACTICAL JOKER blows a kiss to the LEADING LADY/Ophelia as he exits stage left.

The LEADING MAN enters stage right and remains downstage right. The LEADING MAN/Richard III enacts Richard III's mad scene in Richard III Act V scene iii. He has a hump on his back under a cape, and he drags one leg. He carries a long sword. He played Richard III in the distant past. The LEADING LADY/Ophelia continues to drown and sing very softly as underscoring.

LEADING MAN/Richard III:
Have mercy, Jesu!--Soft! I did but dream.
O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!
The lights burn blue. It is now dead midnight.
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
What do I fear? myself? there's none else by:
Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.
Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am:
Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why:
Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself?
Alack. I love myself. Wherefore? for any good
that I myself have done unto myself?
O, no! alas, I rather hate myself
for hateful deeds committed by myself!
I am a villain: yet I lie. I am not.

LEADING LADY/Ophelia continues to sing softly:
They bore him barefaced on the bier,
Hey, non nonny, nonny, hey, nonny,
And in his grave rained many a tear.
And will he not come again?
And will he not come again?
No, no, he is dead,
Go to thy deathbed.
He never will come again.
His beard was as white as snow,
All flaxen was his poll.
He is gone, he is gone,
And we cast away moan,
God ha' mercy on his soul.

[Ophelia's songs, Hamlet Act IV scene v]

The BOHEMIAN LADY enters stage left and remains downstage left. The BOHEMIAN LADY/Lady Macbeth enacts Lady Macbeth's mad scene in Macbeth Act V scene i. She sleepwalks and carries a lighted candle. She wipes her free hand against her dress to clean away the imagined blood. She played Lady Macbeth in the distant past. The LEADING MAN/Richard III addresses Richard III's mad speech to the audience house left. The BOHEMIAN LADY/Lady Macbeth addresses Lady Macbeth's mad speech to the audience house right. The LEADING LADY/Ophelia continues to drown and sing very softly as underscoring.

BOHEMIAN LADY/Lady Macbeth:
She looks at imagined spots on her dress.
Yet here's a spot.
She rubs the imagined spots.
Out, damned spot! out, I say!--One: two:

LEADING MAN/Richard III continues:
Fool, of thyself speak well:

Fool, do not flatter.

Why, then, 'tis time to do't.

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.

Hell is murky!

She looks toward Richard III as if he is Macbeth.

He accuses her of lying.
Perjury, perjury, in the high'st degree

Murder, stem murder, in the direst degree;

All several sins, all used in each degree,
throng to the bar, crying all, Guilty! guilty!

I shall despair. There is no creature loves me;
And if I do die, no soul shall pity me:

He looks toward Lady Macbeth.
Nay, wherefore should they,

since that I myself
find in myself no pity to myself?
Methought the souls of all that I had murder'd
came to my tent; and every one did threat
to-morrow's vengeance on the head of Richard.

[Richard III, Richard III Act V scene iii]

Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard?
What need we fear who knows it,
when none can call our power to account?

Yet who would have thought the old man
to have had so much blood in him.

The thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now?

She looks at her hands.
What, will these hands ne'er be clean?

She looks toward Richard III as if he is Macbeth.
No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that:
You mar all with this starting.
She smells her hand.
Here's the smell of blood still:
All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little
hand.

Oh, oh, oh!

She looks toward Richard III as if he is Macbeth.
Wash your hands, put on your nightgown;
Look not so pale.--I tell you yet again,
Banquo's buried; he cannot come out on's grave.

She is startled by imagined knocking.
To bed, to bed! there's knocking at the gate:
Come, come, come, come give me your hand.

She reaches toward Richard III as if he is Macbeth.
What's done cannot be undone.--To bed, to bed, to bed!
[Lady Macbeth, Macbeth Act V scene i]

The BOHEMIAN LADY/Lady Macbeth, reaching out her hand toward the LEADING MAN/Richard III to lead him to bed, crosses slowly toward downstage center. The LEADING MAN/RICHARD III crosses slowly toward the BOHEMIAN LADY/Lady Macbeth. The PRACTICAL JOKER enters stage left and remains downstage left. The PRACTICAL JOKER as Nick Bottom wears the head of a jackass and a coronet of musk roses. The PRACTICAL JOKER recites Nick Bottom's speech from A Midsummer Night's Dream Act IV scene i. The PRACTICAL JOKER played Nick Bottom in the

distant past. The LEADING LADY/Ophelia continues to drown and sing very softly as underscoring.

PRACTICAL JOKER/Nick Bottom, commenting on the mad scenes he has just witnessed, tells the audience:

I have had a most rare vision.

I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was:

Man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream.

Methought I was--there is no man can tell what.

Methought I was,--and methought I had,--

But man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had.

The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen,

man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive,

nor his heart to report, what my dream was.

[Nick Bottom, A Midsummer Night's Dream Act IV scene i]

LEADING MAN/Richard III seeing the PRACTICAL JOKER wearing the jackass head:

A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!

[Richard III, Richard III Act V scene iv]

PRACTICAL JOKER/Nick Bottom repeating:

Hee Haw! Hee Haw! Etc.

The LEADING MAN/Richard III is wandering around the stage. He is hunched over, dragging a leg, and engaged in a sword fight with an invisible enemy. The LEADING LADY/Ophelia lies centerstage drowning and singing. The BOHEMIAN LADY/Lady Macbeth is sleepwalking around the stage. She is carrying a lighted candle and wiping her free hand against her dress. The PRACTICAL JOKER/Nick Bottom is downstage left. He is braying like a jackass.

The DIRECTOR terribly distraught enters stage right and remains downstage right.

DIRECTOR aloud to himself:

O! let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven;

Keep me in temper; I would not be mad!

[King Lear, King Lear Act I scene v]

The DIRECTOR drops to his knees and elbows. He pounds the stage floor with his fists and feet.

PRACTICAL JOKER removes the jackass head and tells the audience:

Confusion now hath made his masterpiece!

[Macduff, Macbeth Act II scene iii]

The DIRECTOR stops pounding his fists and feet on the stage floor, and he raises his head up.

DIRECTOR to the PRACTICAL JOKER:

O fool, I shall go mad!

[King Lear, King Lear Act II scene iv]

The DIRECTOR returns to pounding his fists and feet on the stage floor.

PRACTICAL JOKER to the audience:

A document in madness.

[Laertes, Hamlet Act IV scene v]

That he is mad, 'tis true.

Tis true, 'tis pity; and pity 'tis 'tis true.

A foolish figure.

[Polonius, Hamlet Act II scene ii]

The DIRECTOR stops pounding his fists and feet on the stage floor, and he raises his head up.

DIRECTOR:

Bedlam! Sheer Bedlam! Call me Poor Tom o' Bedlam!

[Edgar, King Lear Act II scene iii and Act III scene iv. In 1547, King Henry VIII gave Bethlehem Hospital, known by then as Bedlam, to the city of London as an asylum for the mentally deranged.]

The DIRECTOR returns to pounding his fists and feet on the stage floor.

PRACTICAL JOKER to the audience:

Lord, what fools these mortals be!

[Robin Goodfellow/Puck, A Midsummer Night's Dream Act III scene ii]

If this were played upon a stage now, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction.

[Fabian, Twelfth Night Act III scene iv]

The DIRECTOR stops pounding his fists and feet on the stage floor, and he raises his head up.

DIRECTOR:

Bring down the curtain!

The DIRECTOR returns to pounding his fists and feet on the stage floor.

The curtain comes down.

ACT II scene vi
EPILOGUE

Set: There is no set for this scene.

The curtain comes up.

The stage is dark. ALL stand in a straight line from stage right to stage left as follows: the DIRECTOR, the LEADING MAN, the LEADING LADY, the BOHEMIAN LADY, and the PRACTICAL JOKER. ALL have fully recovered from the Mad Scene.

A spotlight appears on the LEADING LADY still holding the basket of flowers from the Mad Scene. The rest of the stage is dark.

LEADING LADY *to the audience:*

**It is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue;
But it is no more unhandsome than to see the lord the prologue.
If it be true that good wine needs no bush,
'tis true that a good play needs no epilogue;
Yet to good wine they do use good bushes,
and good plays prove the better by the help of good epilogues.**

[Rosalind, As You Like It, Act V scene iv. The LEADING LADY played Rosalind in her youth.]

A spotlight appears on the LEADING MAN. The rest of the stage is dark. He stands erect. He is no longer hunched over as Richard III. With both hands, he holds the long sword in front of him with the point of the sword resting on the stage floor.

LEADING MAN *to the audience:*

**Now the play is done:
All is well ended, if this suit be won,
that you express content; which we will pay,
with strife to please you, day exceeding day:
Ours be your patience then, and yours our parts;
Your gentle hands lend us, and take our hearts.**

[King, All's Well That Ends Well Act V scene iii]

A spotlight appears on the BOHEMIAN LADY still holding the lighted candle from the Mad Scene. The rest of the stage is dark.

BOHEMIAN LADY *to the audience:*

Out, out, brief candle!

She blows out the 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.**

[Macbeth, Macbeth Act V scene v. The BOHEMIAN LADY played Lady Macbeth in the distant past.]

A spotlight appears on the PRACTICAL JOKER still holding the jackass head from the Mad Scene. The rest of the stage is dark.

PRACTICAL JOKER *to the audience:*

**If we shadows have offended,
think but this, and all is mended,
that you have but slumber'd here
while these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
no more yielding but a dream,
So, good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends.**

[Robin Goodfellow/Puck, A Midsummer Night's Dream Act V scene ii. The PRACTICAL JOKER played Robin Goodfellow/Puck in the distant past.]

The spotlight widens to include the LEADING MAN, the LEADING LADY, and the BOHEMIAN LADY, as well as the PRACTICAL JOKER. (1) The PRACTICAL JOKER and the BOHEMIAN LADY look at each other and then hold hands. (2) The BOHEMIAN LADY and the LEADING LADY look at each other and then hold hands. (3) The LEADING LADY and the LEADING MAN look at each other and then hold hands.

Then, a second spotlight appears on the DIRECTOR. The first spotlight remains on the LEADING MAN, the LEADING LADY, the BOHEMIAN LADY, and the PRACTICAL JOKER still holding hands.

DIRECTOR *to the audience:*

Our revels now are ended.

These our actors,

He gestures toward the actors holding hands.

as I foretold you, were all spirits and are melted into air, into thin air:

The spotlight on the four actors melts into darkness.

And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,

the cloud-capp'd towers,

the gorgeous palaces,

the solemn temples,

the great globe itself,

ye all which it inherit,

shall dissolve and, like this insubstantial pageant faded, leave not a rack behind.

We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep.

[Prospero, The Tempest Act IV scene i]

The stage lights go dark.

After a pause, a spotlight appears on the PRACTICAL JOKER. The rest of the stage is dark.

PRACTICAL JOKER *to the audience:*

Shakespeare must be rolling over in his grave ... Laughing!

The stage lights go dark, and the curtain comes down on the play.