

MONOLOGUE - SHAKESPEARE

SHAKESPEARE

So! Nigel. What are you and that brother of yours working on? A tragedy? A comedy? A tragic attempt at a comedy?

(to the crowd)

See what I did there?

(THEY don't laugh enough)

SEE WHAT I DID??

THEY laugh harder

Oh, God, he's so paranoid. Always has been. Even when I was a lowly actor in his sad little troupe, he was so *insecure*. Of course, with you as his partner, he has even more reason to be. I've read your sonnets.

HE puts a hand on Nigel's shoulder, nods like "yeah, that's right, I read it." NIGEL waits for a comment.

SHAKESPEARE finds a bit of dust on NIGEL's coat, flicks it off. NIGEL is in agony, waiting.

It's good. Quite good. I'd love to read more.

(feigning surprise)

Oh - is that your folio?

HE points to Nigel's leather notebook

Would you like me to give it a looky-loo? What am I saying? Of course you would! I'm Shakespeare!

MONOLOGUE - NIGEL BOTTOM

NIGEL

“ODE TO Portia” - by Nigel Bottom.

(very fast)

Like-stars-and-sun-together-never-seen,
yet-heaven-made-us-one-our-flame-to-shine,

Sorry - guess I'm more nervous than I thought. Let me try that again...

(deep breath, starting over)

Like stars and sun together never seen, yet heaven made us one our flames to shine
Through night and day, no dusk or dawn between, and none could dime our light not love divine

(a little faster)

Astronomers - behold these starry eyes!
Forbidden love - bid secret hearts beat loud!
If laws of man our stately love denies.
In laws of nature is our love allowed

(really fast)

And-to-the-stars-will-fly-the-elusive-dove-to-heaven's-gate-with-my-eternal-love!

(breathless, turns away)

I finished too quickly. I skipped straight to the final couplet.

MONOLOGUE - NOSTRADAMUS

NOSTRADAMUS

Okay! Shakespeare's biggest hit. Here we go!

NOSTRADAMUS does a ritual - rubbing hands, fingers to temples, etc. HE stumbles back, NICK catches him.

Whoa! I see it! Shakespeare's greatest play! ... the one they will be talking about for generations to come... And this play will be called...

(squinting, straining, then painting it in the air)

“OMELETTE”

NOSTRADAMUS

Do I hear a need for future seeing? If seeing is what you need, then I can help you. If help is what you need, then I can see you. If neither is what you need, then I can foresee you leaving very shortly. So—am I hired? Actually, I know I will be, I'm just being polite.

MONOLOGUE - BROTHER JEREMIAH

BROTHER JEREMIAH

As if theater wasn't heinous enough, you've now added *music*—which leads to dancing... which *stirs the loins* and promotes lustful desires, which is why we must see the theaters pulled down—for we can not abide such ungodly erections.

There's an awkward pause as the phrase just hangs there. JEREMIAH continues.

As a magistrate, I have much influence with the Master of the Justice. So you listen to this, *Bottom*. If you continue promoting this filth and debauchery, I will see you tied to a post begging for mercy as I give you the rod.

(HE pauses a moment, pondering what he said, how it sounded...)

Good day, sir.

MONOLOGUE - BEA

BEA

Do you know the poem “Love is a shit-load of work?” No? That’s because the poets never write about what love is really like. Try being married for ten years, it’s not all summer’s days and sweet-smelling roses. It’s more like “Shall I compare thee to a horse’s ass?”

She laughs

Look, I’ll admit I’ve never seen him like this. He’s under a lot of pressure and done some really stupid things; keeping stuff to himself, saying hurtful things, taking all our savings from the money box... Oh yeah. Still trying to figure out how that love poem is gonna end. But what stops us from walking out on him? I think it’s because you know, like I know, if you ever got in trouble he would be there just to bail you out.

SCENE 3 - SHYLOCK THE JEW

SHYLOCK

Your debt is due.

NICK

Shhh....

(pulls him away from the house)

I've, uh... hit a little setback with the play. But—if you give me another week—I'll name a character after you.

SHYLOCK

Too late. Shakespeare already promised that. I can see it now: “Shylock—the really nice Jew.” Here's a better offer. Cut me in as an investor in your play and I'll cancel your debt.

NICK

You're not a patron, you're a money leader!

SHYLOCK

BECAUSE THAT'S THE ONLY JOB THEY'LL LET JEWS DO! But what I really love—ohhhhh, what gives me nachus in my pupik—is *the theater*. I LOVE IT! I-love-it I-love-it I-love-it. I love the sights, the smells, the roar of the crowd, the splat of the fruit as it hits the actors. It's a temple to me, I tell you. A temple! Catholic, Protestant, Jew—I don't give a rat's *tuchus*. My religion—is *theater*.

NICK

Wow, I had no idea. But I can't, it's illegal. If I let you invest we'd both be *hanged* at Tyburn.

SHYLOCK

At least you'd finally have an audience. Take the weekend. Mull it over. Because on Monday, your interest doubles.

SCENE 2 - LORD CLAPHAM, NICK and NIGEL BOTTOM

NICK

I'm starting to believe this is gonna be the Bottom Brothers' first hit.

LORD CLAPHAM

Pity we have to shut it down!

LORD CLAPHAM, their patron, enters. THEY all bow to him.

NICK

Lord Clapham. What do you mean—shut it down?

LORD CLAPHAM

Guess whose next production is going to be The Tragedy of Richard the 2nd??

CLAPHAM unrolls a scroll that says "THE TRAGEDIES OF RICHARD II by William Shakespeare."

NIGEL

Shakespeare??

NICK

Why is he doing Richard the 2nd?? He just did Richard the 3rd! Who goes backwards?!

NIGEL

He breaks convention. That's why he's so great.

NICK

Oh yeah? Did you see Romeo and Juliet? What's so great about two lovers who kill themselves in the end?

LORD CLAPHAM

OH, YOU'VE SPOILT IT! I'm seeing it this evening.

NIGEL

You should, it's life-changing.

NICK

Is it? "Love you, stab myself, drink poison, the end."

LORD CLAPHAM

(putting fingers in his ears, stomping like a child)

STOP IT! STOP IT! STOP IT! You're ruining everything! Now I paid for an original play and you will lose my patronage, do you hear? No more money—unless I hear a new idea—on the morrow!

SCENE 8 - NIGEL and PORTIA

NIGEL

HE stands to leave and is blocked by A WOMAN IN A CLOAK (PORTIA)
Oh. Good day, mistress.

PORTIA

“Good days were those when lit with love, till dusk of death did herald th’eternal night”

NIGEL

Hey—I wrote that.

The WOMAN lowers her hood, revealing herself to be PORTIA.

PORTIA

Yes, I know.

(holding up a page)

I accidentally took this after our first encounter. Your first sonnet. It’s—perfection.

NIGEL

Really? You thought it was...good?

PORTIA

It...touched me in places I did not know could be touched.

PORTIA suddenly realizes how that sounded, turns away—embarrassed.

Forgive me. Poetry is forbidden in my house, especially poems of earthly love.

(melodramatically, to the heavens)

OH, IS THERE NO PITY SITTING IN THE CLOUDS THAT SEES INTO THE BOTTOM OF MY GRIEF?!

NIGEL

Romeo and Juliet, Act 3, Scene 5.

PORTIA

You’ve seen it?

NIGEL

Six times, and you?

PORTIA

Eight! If my father knew, he’d disown me.

NIGEL

My brother too.

PORTIA

I adore Shakespeare.

NIGEL

Me too! I’ve got a Comedy of Errors, first edition.

PORTIA

I’ve got a Sonnet number 1. Signed!

SCENE 5 - NICK BOTTOM and NOSTRADAMUS

NICK

Who are you?

NOSTRADAMUS

I—am Nostradamus.

NICK

THE Nostradamus?

NOSTRADAMUS

No. I'm his nephew. Thomas.

NICK

Thomas Nostradamus?

NOSTRADAMUS

(raising his hand as if giving oath)

I promise. But I share the same gifts as my esteemed uncle. And for half a crown, I'll share those gifts with you. And I predict for you a new life... with no teeth! That was a freebie.

NICK

Uhhh... I'll keep looking if you don't mind.

NOSTRADAMUS

Suit yourself.

(getting a vision, then eerily)

But beware the sign of the black dog.

NICK

Right. Thank you. Good luck in the asylum.

NOSTRADAMUS goes one way, NICK goes the other. A PUB SIGN shifts and falls, stopping just before hitting Nick on the head. It says "THE BLACK DOG".

Half a crown you said?

NOSTRADAMUS

Excellent! Now—what would you like the future to tell?

SCENE 4 - NICK BOTTOM and BEA

BEA

There would've been meat, but the landlord came by demanding the rent—took our last shilling right out of my hand. Then I was gonna surprise you with some mutton—but sheep are *fast*.

NICK

Wait, wh—you chased a SHEEP? Alright, that's it.

HE pushes away from the table and heads for a WOODEN LOCK BOX on the mantle.

BEA

What are you doing?

HE grabs the money box. SHE quickly takes it away.

No! We've been through this, we do not touch the money box!

SHE puts it back.

NICK

Come on, Bea... we shouldn't have to live like this. You deserve better.

BEA

And so do you—we all do, and that's what we're saving for. A better life. A simple cottage in the country, for all of us. You, me, a couple of kids...

Now, I know it's been a while since we've put any money in there, and that's why I was thinking—I should get a job.

NICK

What? No, if you get a job, that will just make me feel like a failure. None of the other writers' wives have jobs.

BEA

Well, they should. This is the nineties! We've got a woman on the throne and by the year 1600, women will be completely equal to men. Ooh! I just thought of the perfect job for me. I could be in your play!

NICK

What?? You can't act.

SHE bursts into tears, covers her face with her hands.

Sorry, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings.

BEA

Gotcha. See I can act.

SCENE 3 - NICK and NIGEL BOTTOM

NICK

New idea... new idea... we need a new idea.

NIGEL

I still saw we should write our life story—two orphaned brothers, their father lost at sea, whose mother died of a broken heart. How you, at age 14, carried me, your sickly little brother on your back—all the way from Cornwall.

NICK

No. We gotta think bigger! We have to *innovate*. The world is changing. I recently heard about a man who has a toilet that *flushes*.

NIGEL

Really?? He doesn't throw his shit into the street?

NICK

No. He pulls a lever and it gets *whooshed* down a pipe... and then into the street. And that's what we need. Something *new*.

NIGEL

But that's what you're good at—big ideas. I'm really just a poet at heart. You were doing better without me, oh God am I the problem?

NICK

No. Shakespeare is. Why did I ever suggest he become a writer? I was just trying to get him out of our troupe because he was so annoying. No he's like this giant sun...that...that...

NIGEL

“Shine so bright, no other star is seen.”

NICK

See? That's good! Which is why we work together. Now let's get to it.