

## 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.