

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

By John S. Lennox

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

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THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

Cast of Characters

Professor Goodfellow
Dean Talnogg
Bob Tapatski (Stoner)
Jerri Herron (Stoner)
Summer Flowers (Flower Child)
Chad Darrell (Jock)
Miron Dwixel (Geek)
Allister Betzel (Geek, wears a retainer and lisps)
Sheri Connely
Kristin McHale (Chip's girlfriend)
Chip Banner (Kristin's boyfriend)
Andi Maythen (Female)
Drew Lockhart (Female dance student)
Tara Lowert
Rae Tarlen (Female)
Sam Kawolski (Biker chic, who is a terrible bully)
Randi Florin (Female)
Joe Langsten (Very hard of hearing)
Dancers extras

Note: There are very few cases where any character is required to be any specific gender. Feel free to change names and genders at will.

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

ACT 1 SCENE 1

PROFESSOR GOODFELLOW, *He is British, with a very sarcastic snobby attitude, is at his lectern awaiting the entrance of the students of his Renaissance Literature Class. DEAN TALNOGG enters.*

DEAN. Robin, I wanted to let you know that I will be attending your class's performance, and I will be expecting them to incorporate what they've learned in your class in their final works.

PROF. Indeed. I'm glad you'll be able to make it.

DEAN. Well, to be honest with you Robin, if this project of yours is a failure, you will not be asked back next term.

PROF. Ah, well, thank you for your candor dean. I don't think you will be disappointed.

DEAN. I should hope not. *(The students enter from stage left into the classroom. RAE TARLEN is listening to an iPod and singing along with it. BOB TAPATSKI, JERRI HERRON, SUMMER FLOWERS CHAD DARRELL, MIRON DWIXEL, ALLISTER BETZEL, HERI CONNELLY, KRISTIN MCHALE, CHIPBANNER, ANDI MAYTHEN, DREW LOCKHART, TARA LOWERT, SAM KOWALSKI, RANDI FLORIN and JOE JANGSTEN follow. There are no chairs, tables or desks in the classroom. They briefly talk amongst each other as college students do prior to their class beginning. After a few moments Professor Goodfellow begins the class.)*

PROF. Good afternoon class. Please find your seats. *(Motioning out to audience area.)* For the next three classes we will be focusing on the Renaissance concepts of death found in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

and Hamlet. Very different concepts are inherent in these works, but still, they do have a common thread.

TARA. Uhh, professor.

PROF. Yes, Tara.

TARA. Well, I was just wondering....don't we have a huge final exam project to do in a two weeks?

PROF. Yes.

TARA. Well, maybe it would be helpful if you'd give us the next three classes to rehearse.

PROF. Well, I cannot tell you how excited I am to see you taking such an interest in the preparation of your final scenes. Smashing idea! I am willing to forego my lecture sessions that I had planned so that you can all rehearse. Does anyone have any questions before you begin? *(Bob, a complete stoner, raises his hand.)*

PROF. *(Reluctantly.)* Yes, Mr. Tapatski.

BOB. Umm....rehearse what?

SUMMER. The final projects, you stoned-out moron.

BOB. We have a final project?

SHERI. We have to perform the death scenes in the plays of Shakespeare.

PROF. Thank you, Sheri.

BOB. Which scenes?

PROF. All of them. You may perform any death scenes from Shakespeare's canon. *(Jerri raises his hand.)* Yes, Mr. Herron.

JERRI. Shakespeare like, killed people with cannons?

PROF. *(Pause. Very sarcastically.)* Yes. It's a little-known fact that Shakespeare was a very sadistic character and used to roll a cannon around the streets of London shooting people. However, it may be difficult for us to actually use a real cannon in our final exam...I see your point. Good thinking. Ah! Here's an idea. Why don't you and Mr. Tapatski flip through some of Shakespeare's plays and find some interesting death scenes to act out for us on the last day of class? I'm sure we would all be immensely thrilled to see the two of you choose perhaps two of the suicides and do them for us.

BOB. That sounds cool.

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

SUMMER. Professor? I was wondering as I was looking through the death scenes, I mean, they're all so morbid. Does it have to be a scene where the character physically dies? Can we do a scene where the character's heart and soul dies?

PROF. Ah, a very good question Summer. Indeed, one of the Renaissance concepts of death dealt with the question of how one can go on living when their heart and soul has died? Death is preferable to an empty life.

SUMMER. Wow, professor! I never knew you were so sensitive. So, I can do a scene where the character's heart and soul dies then?

PROF. If it makes the character stop breathing, yes. Any other questions?

RAE. Professor, are you still planning on inviting an audience?

PROF. Yes.

RANDI. Well, we aren't actors.

CHAD. Yeah, I've never done any plays before, ya know...short of football plays.

BOB. *(Fake coughing.)* Jock. Jock.

PROF. Everyone, I am not expecting Royal Shakespeare Company level performances. I simply want you to understand what Shakespeare was saying in the text, and how it relates to the Renaissance concept of death. Once you grasp his meaning, conveying it to an audience will not be as difficult as you may believe.

RAE. I've been having trouble with finding costumes and props and stuff.

PROF. Perhaps contact the theatre department here on campus. You will not be graded on the quality of your props and costuming. Nor will you even be graded on your acting skill. You will, however, be graded on your grasp of Shakespeare's text and your conceptualization of conveying his message to an audience. *(Jerri raises his hand. Prof reluctantly calls upon him.)* Yes, Mr. Herron.

JERRI. Whose message?

PROF. Shakespeare's!

BOB. The dude with the cannon, remember?

JERRI. Oh, Right. Yeah, cool.

PROF. Did your parents enroll you in college as some sort of a cruel joke?

JERRI. Dude, it's like he read our minds, man.

PROF. *(Pause.)* Any questions from people still on this planet?

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

KRISTIN. I've been working on mine, and was wondering if we can modernize the language in our interpretation?

PROF. I think a great deal of the power of Shakespeare's message is often lost by doing so. Remember, he chose his words very carefully. His metaphor and simile are very specific. They offer us an insight into the Renaissance concept of death. (*Long Pause.*)

CHAD. (*To Kristin.*) So, is that a "no"?

PROF. That is a "no", Chad.

SUMMER. But professor, you say you want us to express our interpretation of Shakespeare's message, but you aren't letting us personalize our scenes. How can we create our own expressions if we aren't allowed to internalize it in a way that moves us, as he intended his work to do?

RAE. Yeah! We need to be able to allow the scene to affect us in order to express our interpretation.

DREW. Could we be allowed to express these scenes in our own manner so long as we don't degrade the message or the work?

PROF. If you use the text of Shakespeare in your scene, it must remain the way he wrote it. Your task is to analyze it, understand it and convey its message to the

audience. (*Mockingly.*) If, however, you feel can find a way to perform a death scene without the accompanying text in such a manner that we, as the audience, can understand his message and the Renaissance concept of death inherent in the text, by all means, feel free to try.

CHIP. Can Kristin and I do the *Romeo and Juliet* death scene at the end of the play?

PROF. I don't see why not. If there are no further questions, you may begin to rehearse your scenes. I shall remain here at my lectern if you have any questions about the text. (*The students chat a bit amongst themselves.*)

SUMMER. (*Approaches the professor.*) The death of King Duncan is one that takes place off stage...

PROF. Yes...

SUMMER. I wanted to do that one. Is that O.K.? I mean, I know there's no dialogue involved since it's an offstage death and all.

PROF. That's perfectly fine.

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

SUMMER. Cool. Thanks.

PROF. Incidentally, Summer, what do you intend to do with it?

SUMMER. I'm going to make King Duncan a baby seal and have Macbeth be a seal hunter and club him.

PROF. *(Pause.)* I can't say as I can accept that as a viable interpretation.

SUMMER. But there are no lines, so I'm not modernizing the text.

PROF. There's still the meaning of the death itself- what Shakespeare intended to say to his audience about mankind. There is a wealth of information about the concepts of life and death in that one offstage action. It is not a political statement.

SAM. Wasn't Duncan the king?

PROF. Yes...

RANDI. And Macbeth murdered him so that he could take the throne, right?

PROF. Well, yes, but...

SUMMER. Sounds kind of political to me.

PROF. Not in the way you're dealing with it! It was not so much a statement about politics as it was an insight into the lengths mankind will go to when ruled by their own ambition.

SUMMER. So, the death of King Duncan is about Lady Macbeth being ruled by her own ambition and forcing her husband to follow along in her diabolical scheme of murder in order to obtain power.

PROF. Yes. Well, there's a bit more to it than that, but in general, the concept of death to which that murder alludes to is how little value mankind places on human life when ambition and greed are factors in the equation.

SUMMER. So, I could have Vladimir Putin kill President Zelensky on top of a barrel of oil then...

PROF. WHAT!?

SUMMER. You said that it was about how little human life is valued when greed and ambition are involved. Well, I think this war in the Ukraine is all about greed and ambition. So, can I do it that way then?

PROF. No.

SUMMER. Why?

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

PROF. If Putin's wife had coerced him to kill Zelensky and he then became King of Ukraine, I'd consider it. But that did not happen, and your political and environmental opinions, Ms. Flowers, will not enter into this project and that's final!

BOB. Hey, Proffo...

PROF. Oh, God.

BOB. Jerri and I want to do the duel to the death between Puck and Oberon.

PROF. Gentlemen, there's no such duel in that play. Have you even read it?

BOB. Well, no, but we rented the movie.

PROF. I see. Which version was it? The Reinhardt version, or one of the modern versions... I believe there was one with Kevin Kline. Was it that one?

JERRI. Kevin who? Uhh, no. We couldn't find that. So instead we got *(The stoners both get up and get into a stance to ready themselves for the title of the film.)*

JERRI & BOB. *(To each other.)* Ready? Yeah. *(In a very heavy metal type posture.)* "Puck's Revenge from Hell"!

PROF. I see. Well, unfortunately Mr. Herron, I believe the writers of "Puck's Revenge from Hell" took some liberties with the play. You'll find the storyline vastly different from Shakespeare's if you read *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

BOB. Whoa, really?

PROF. Indeed. Might I suggest the assassination of the Duke of Clarence? He is stabbed by two murderers and then stuffed into a cask of wine.

JERRI. Oooh. Me likee...

PROF. Nor am I a bit surprised. Now go, please and rehearse somewhere else. *(Andi raises her hand.)*

PROF. Yes, Andi. What do you need?

ANDI. Can Drew and I practice somewhere else?

PROF. You may rehearse anywhere you wish. I, however, will only be in this classroom. So, if you desire any assistance, at any time over the next three class sessions, I suggest you rehearse here. *(All students exit.)* Or not. *(Prof exits.)*

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

SCENE 2

The Professor is at the lectern as lights come up. Sheri and Tara enter.

PROF. Well Sheri, what scene will the two of you be rehearsing today?

SHERI. The Tybalt, Mercutio duel in Romeo and Juliet.

PROF. Ah, yes. A classic example of a duel in the Renaissance. Excellent choice. Carry on. *(Sits at his lectern reading, while looking over his book to what the students are doing.)*

SHERI. *(To Tara.)* O.K. Here we will have Mercutio and Benvolio running away from Tybalt and his friends. *(Prof begins to stare at them as they discuss this.)*

TARA. Cool. Then they get stuck in an alley, and Tybalt and his friends catch up to them. Here's where Mercutio says "Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you walk?", trying to get him to go away. *(Professor is aghast.)*

SHERI. Yeah, and then Tybalt says "What wouldst thou have with me?", and Mercutio says "Good King of Cats, nothing but one of your nine lives, that I mean to make bold withall", so he's saying that he wishes he had Tybalt's life, kinda buttering him up so he'll go away. Then he says "Will you pluck your sword out of his pilcher by the ears?". Sort of saying "Do you really want to fight?" Then he says "Make haste, least mine be about your ears ere it be out.". He's trying to threaten him to leave here...

PROF. STOP!

TARA. What?

PROF. I don't think you understand the text.

SHERI. Am I missing the mark a little?

PROF. To put it mildly...

SHERI. So, Mercutio wants a fight?

PROF. Did you read the whole scene or just the lines prior to the fight?

TARA. Well, we sort of skimmed the scene, but it didn't make much sense.

PROF. Very well. Let's go over it together, shall we? Here. Begin here.

SHERI. *(Reading Benvolio's part.)* By my head here comes the Capulets.

TARA. By my heel I care not.

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

PROF. Yes, this is where Tybalt and his cousins enter. Benvolio is concerned that they may get into a fight, and Mercutio is saying that he does not care. Read on. Sheri, you should take over Tybalt's lines now.

SHERI. Follow me close, for I will speak to them. Gentlemen, good den, a word with one of you.

TARA. And but one word with one of us? Couple it with something, make it a word and a blow. Isn't he telling Tybalt to blow off after he says what he has to say?

PROF. No. He's telling Tybalt to say his word and combine it with a strike.

TARA. So, he's daring Tybalt to hit him.

PROF. Yes.

SHERI. You shall find me apt enough to that sir, and you will give me occasion. He's saying "I'll bitch-slap you if you give me a reason to, punk.", right?

PROF. *(In a playful sort of manner.)* Oh, Sheri, would that you were around in Shakespeare's day. He might have benefited from your poetic musings. But, yes, you are essentially correct.

TARA. So, neither one wants to start the fight. They want the other to start it so they kind of have a reason to fight, and all their buddies will respect them for defending the family's honor, even if they have to skip town afterward. Cool. *(She continues.)* Could you not take some occasion without giving?

PROF. Skip to Romeo's entrance.

SHERI. And Tybalt says to Mercutio: Well peace be with you sir, here comes my man. So, Tybalt is actually after Romeo, not Mercutio.

PROF. Correct.

TARA. But I'll be hang'd sir if he wear your livery. Marry go before to field, he'll be your follower, your worship in that sense, may call him man.

SHERI. Romeo, the love I bear thee, can afford no better term than this: Thou art a villain.

PROF. I will read Romeo for you if you wish. *(Sheri hands Prof her script, Prof ignores it and recites the lines from memory.)* Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee, doth much excuse the appertaining rage to

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

such a greeting: villain am I none; therefore farewell, I see thou know'st me not.

TARA. So, Tybalt just insulted Romeo so that he'll fight him.

PROF. Correct.

TARA. But Romeo wimps out.

PROF. There are reasons for it, but effectively, yes. Romeo did not want to enter into a fight with Tybalt and risk being banished as the Prince stated in the beginning.

SHERI. So, Tybalt is trying to piss off Romeo so he'll fight him.

PROF. Precisely.

TARA. Wicked.

PROF. Yes...my sentiments...exactly.

SHERI. Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries that thou hast done me, therefore turn and draw.

PROF. I do protest I never injur'd thee, but lov'd thee better than thou can'st devise: till thou shalt know the reason of my love, and so good Capulet, which name I tender as dearly as my own, be satisfied.

TARA. O calm, dishonourable, vile submission: Alla stoccata carries it away. Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you walk? Now I get it. He's pissed off that Romeo let Tybalt insult him and didn't challenge him to a duel. So, he's gonna do it.

PROF. Exactly. He says "O calm, dishonourable, vile submission", because Romeo has allowed his honor to be besmirched.

SHERI. What wouldst thou have with me?

TARA. Good King of Cats, nothing but one of your nine lives, that I mean to make bold withall, and as you shall use me hereafter dry beat the rest of the eight. Will you pluck your sword out of his pilcher by the ears? Make haste, least mine be about your ears ere it be out. He wants kill Tybalt, right? He's telling Tybalt "I'm gonna kick your ass, and you'd better draw your sword before I cut your damn head off."

PROF. *(Pause.)* Uuh...quite.

SHERI. I am for you.

PROF. Romeo says: Gentle Mercutio, put thy rapier up.

TARA. Because he's a wuss.

PROF. Continue.

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

TARA. Come sir, your passado.

PROF. Romeo jumps in between them and says: Draw Benvolio, beat down their weapons: Gentlemen, for shame forbear this outrage, Tybalt, Mercutio, the Prince expressly hath forbidden bandying in Verona streets. Hold Tybalt, good Mercutio. And at that point, Mercutio is hit.

TARA. So, we'd start it after Mercutio's line: "Come sir, your passado."?

PROF. Yes. But you will need a Romeo and Benvolio for this scene.

SHERI. Yeah, we'll get Chip for Benvolio, and maybe Sam to play Romeo. It might be neat to have a girl play Romeo too.

PROF. Not that girl it wouldn't. She'd end the quarrel by killing you both, mark my words.

TARA. O.K., maybe Chad for Benvolio, since he doesn't talk from the point we're starting from, and Chip for Romeo.

PROF. Interesting, since I believe he's doing a scene as Romeo with Kristin. I'm sure he'll be interested in helping you.

SHERI. Until then, could you step in as Romeo when we reach that point?

PROF. I'd rather not. I'm not sure how good the college's medical plan is.

TARA. We'll just walk through the motions. Don't worry.

PROF. Why do the words "Don't worry" always end in disaster? Very well.

SHERI. So, what move do you want to start with?

TARA. I dunno. What were you thinking?

PROF. Shakespeare told you what to start with.

SHERI. What?

PROF. Come sir, your passado. (*demonstrates a passado.*)

SHERI. O.K. so we start with the passado. Then where do you want to go from here?

TARA. Well, I'd probably do this and attack you here.

SHERI. O.K., then I could do this and stab at you here.

TARA. I'll block that and come back at you with a cut to your head...

(*They work out some more of the choreography.*)

TARA. O.K. Professor, this is where we'll have Romeo jump in. So, could you jump in and grab my arm?

PROF. All right. I jump in and say: Draw Benvolio, beat down their weapons: Gentlemen, for shame forbear this outrage, Tybalt, Mercutio, the

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

Prince expressly hath forbidden bandying in Verona streets. Hold Tybalt, good Mercutio. *(Sheri thrusts.)* OW!!

SHERI. Romeo doesn't say that.

PROF. You hit me with the hilt of your sword you bloody moron!

TARA. *(As they are helping Prof offstage.)* You got 'im?

SHERI. I got 'im, yeah.

TARA. *(Goes back and picks up scripts and swords as Sheri exits with the Prof.)* Next time use the sharp end, Sheri. *(She exits.)*

SCENE 3

Sam enters with Miron. Miron is quiet and obviously scared.

SAM. You wanted us to show you the scenes we're doing. I'm doing the Joan of Arc, Prince Charles fight.

PROF. But no one dies in that fight. See here...Henry six, part one, act one, scene two: Prince Charles the Dolphin says: Who e're helps thee, 'tis thou that must help me: Impatiently I burn with thy desire, my heart and hands thou hast at once subdu'd. Excellent Pucelle, if thy name be so, Let me thy servant, and not Sovereign be, 'Tis the French Dolphin sueth to thee thus. See? No death.

SAM. I could kill him. Then it would be a death scene.

PROF. No, then it would be murder one, which is a felony in the United States of America except apparently in New York, Chicago and most of Texas. What's your next choice?

SAM. The Joan of Arc, Talbot fight scene.

PROF. Again, no one dies in that scene. Apparently, you haven't really read this play. Let's read that section together, shall we? I'll read Talbot and you read Joan. *(She gives him a withering glare.)* Miron, you read Joan. Heavens, can you suffer Hell so to prevail? My breast I'll burst with straining of my courage, and from my shoulders crack my arms asunder, But I will chastise this high-minded Strumpet. *(Looking at Sam during this line.)* They continue their fight.

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

MIRON. Talbot farewell, thy hour is not yet come, I must go victual Orleance forthwith:

PROF. And she leaves. Talbot does not die here. He dies later, but not by Joan, and not in combat.

SAM. Does it specifically say how he dies?

PROF. He dies grieving over his son's death.

SAM. But it's feasible that he could be wounded from battle, and while he's grieving he kicks off, right?

PROF. No. That changes the whole concept of death in that scene. Talbot dies from the loss of his son whom he dearly loves. This is another aspect of the Renaissance concept of death. There are numerous instances in Renaissance literature in which someone dies of grief. You could certainly do Talbot's death scene and explore that concept. I would not have a problem with you playing a man. That would, of course require reading the play.

SAM. No. But, his son John died on the battlefield. In act four, scene seven, Talbot says: Young Talbot's valor makes me smile at thee. When he perceiv'd me shrink, and on my knee, his bloody sword he brandisht over me, And like a hungry lyon did commence rough deeds of rage, and stern impatience: But when my angry guardant stood alone, tendering my ruin, and assail'd of none, dizzie-ey'd fury, and great rage of heart, suddenly made him from my side to start into the clustring battle of the French: And in that sea of blood, my boy did drench his over-mounting spirit; and there died my Icarus, my blossom, in his pride.

PROF. (*Flips feverishly through the book.*) Ah, well, yes. I stand corrected. So, he does.

SAM. So, Talbot's son was killed in battle with the French?

PROF. Yes, so it appears.

SAM. It doesn't specifically say who in the French army killed him does it?

PROF. No, not specifically.

SAM. And Joan Pucelle is the leader of the French army, isn't she?

PROF. Yes...she is.

SAM. So, since this death scene takes place offstage, and it isn't mentioned who kills him, (*She grabs Miron.*) I can kill him, can't I?

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

PROF. I suppose.

MIRON. Professor!!!

PROF. Well, what I mean is...you can choose to perform this death scene of John Talbot by having him be killed by Joan Pucelle if you wish.

SAM. Cool. C'mon geek. *(She grabs Miron and drags him out of the class. On the way, he is flailing and ends up kicking her in the shin. She stops and punches him in the face. He flies across the room.)*

PROF. Here, here. None of that in my classroom.

SAM. Just practicing our scene professor. *(She grabs Miron and stomach punches him several times.)*

PROF. Well, considering that this death takes place on the battlefield, shouldn't you both have swords?

MIRON. God NO!! Don't put a weapon in her hand!!

SAM. This is *(Punches Miron.)* the part *(Throws him to the ground.)* where we've *(Begins kicking him on the ground.)* lost...our...swords *(Picks him up by the hair.)* and *(Smashes his head into the wall several times.)* began to fight hand to hand.

PROF. Oh. Very well. Carry on. *(Sits down and reads book.)*

MIRON. Oh God! She's killing me! *(She begins throttling him.)*

PROF. Miron, I realize that there are no lines in this death scene, seeing as it occurs offstage, but if you are going to create some, please be so kind as to keep it as period as possible and preferably in iambic pentameter. *(He goes back to his paperwork. Sam continues beating Miron throughout the following lines.)*

MIRON. Someone help me. I am dying. Kill her. She breaketh sure my bones, I cannot stop her, A killer clad in leather crusheth them. Alas, I bleed. I'll use the force on thee: *(He extends his hand.)*

SAM. Seriously? *(She grabs his arm and flips him.)*

MIRON. She Devil, thy force is stronger than mine: Blood now you draw from me, thou art a witch, Mayhaps Scottie will transport me hither.

PROF. *(Paying no real attention to what is happening.)* Thank you.

SAM. I'll transport you, geek!

MIRON. AAAHHhhhh!!!!

PROF. Have a nice day. *(Sam drags Miron out of the classroom as Kristin and Chip enter.)*

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

CHIP. Professor, we'd like you to look at our scene if you would.

PROF. *(Looking up from book.)* Yes, of course, Chip. I'd be delighted. We just finished a stirring rendition of the death of John Talbot. Yours is the final scene with Romeo and Juliet if I recall.

KRISTIN. Yes. We've done some rehearsing already and want you to see what we've come up with.

PROF. Excellent. I look forward to it.

CHIP. O.K. She'll just lay down on the floor for this rehearsal. Hopefully we'll have some sort of bench or something for the final. I've made some cuts in the monologue. I hope it's O.K.

PROF. Yes, yes. No changes though? *(Chip shakes his head "no". Kristin lies on the floor. Chip walks away a bit and then "enters". This scene is acted perfectly.)* Chip. O my love, my wife, death that hath suckt the honey of thy breath, hath had no power yet upon thy beauty: thou are not conquer'd: beauty's ensign yet is crimson in thy lips, and in thy cheeks, and death's pale flag is not advanced there. Eyes look your last: arms take your last embrace: and lips, O you the doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss, a dateless bargain to engrossing death: here's to my love. O true apothecary: thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die. *(He dies.)*

KRISTIN. What's here, a cup clos'd in my true loves hand? Poison I see hath bin his timeless end. O churl, drink all, and left no friendly drop, to help me after, I will kiss thy lips, haply some poison yet doth hang on them, to make me die with a restorative. Thy lips are warm. Yea noise? Then I'll be brief. O happy dagger. 'This is thy sheath, there rust and let me die.

PROF. Wonderful. You've captured everything about this death scene- the concept of love so powerful that to live without it is not living. Excellent.

KRISTIN. Thank you. We've worked really hard on it. It was kind of a labor of love anyway...no pun intended.

PROF. Indeed. Well, excellent scene. I shall be pleased to present that to the audience next week.

DEAN. *(Pokes his head in USSR)* Dr. Goodfellow. My office. Now...

PROF. Yes, dean. Well, if you have no further questions..

KRISTIN. No. I think we're all set. Thanks for seeing it. *(Professor exits)*

CHIP. Whew! Glad that's over. One more run through on the day of the

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

final and we're done with it.

KRISTIN. *(She stops cold)* What?

CHIP. I said we're almost done with this stupid crap.

KRISTIN. Stupid crap???

CHIP. Yeah, I mean, seriously who would actually kill themselves over the death of a lover?

KRISTIN. They were married!

CHIP. What...like two days?

KRISTIN. It doesn't matter. They were in love!

CHIP. Oh, c'mon. They hadn't actually known each other more than a few days or so. How deeply in love could they be?

KRISTIN. Apparently deeper in love than we are.

CHIP. What? Oh, c'mon. You know I love you.

KRISTIN. You say that, but now I'm not so sure what that means anymore. Romeo loved Juliet passionately, romantically. How do you love me?

CHIP. Well, I love you that way too.... *(He takes her in his arms.)* especially the passionately part.

KRISTIN. *(She pushes him away.)* See this is exactly what I mean. You have no concept about the kind of love that was between Romeo and Juliet. That's the kind of love I want. Romance, passion, devotion.

CHIP. I've got all that.

KRISTIN. Really? Here's the dagger. Die for me.

CHIP. *(Pause.)* Romeo waited 'til she was dead first... *(She slaps him and exits.)*

SCENE 4

The scene begins outside. Joe, Rae and Summer are walking to Andi's dorm room.

JOE. You know where she lives?

SUMMER. Yeah, *(Looks at a paper.)* Looks like it's that dorm there. *(Points.)*

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

JOE. *(Looks up.)* What storm? It looks perfectly fine to me.

SUMMER. DORM! She told me what DORM she lives in. Jesus! This is why we don't play WITH EXPLOSIVES! *(Pointing to her ears.)*

JOE. Yeah.... What scene is Andi doing?

RAE. Cleopatra's suicide.

JOE. What?

SUMMER. Cleopatra's suicide.

JOE. Cleopatra's two asides? I thought these had to be death scenes.

RAE. Cleopatra's SUICIDE! *(Mimes hanging. With grotesque face.)*

JOE. Oh. Not familiar with that one.

SUMMER. Here's her dorm. *(They knock at the door.)*

ANDI. Come on in. *(She is doing Yoga as they enter.)*

SUMMER. Hi Andi.

RAE. Hi Andi.

ANDI. Hi Summer, Hi Rae, Hi Joe. I'm just finishing up my yoga. Who wants to work on theirs first?

SUMMER. You can. *(Rae is setting down books.)*

ANDI. Cool. Joe, could you grab my asp? *(Joe stares blankly for a moment, then reaches out with his hands toward Andi's rear. Summer grabs a basket and shoves it into Joe's hands before he reaches Andi.)*

SUMMER. ASP! *(Holds up snake.)*

JOE. Oh. *(Takes snake drops it in basket. Andi stands up and turns toward Joe.)* Here.

ANDI. Thanks. O.K. So I'm doing Cleopatra's death scene. Summer, would you be my Charmain for the scene? You'll have to memorize a few lines, so look them over. *(She hands Summer a paper.)*

SUMMER. Sure.

ANDI. And Rae could you be Iras? She doesn't have any lines.

RAE. O.K.

ANDI. *(To Summer and Rae.)* Here, *(They all, including Joe, look closely at the paper.)* right after I say "Farewell kind Chamain, Iras, long farewell.", I have to kiss each of you. Are you O.K. with that?

SUMMER. Sure, whatever.

RAE. Yeah, I'm fine with that.

JOE. Yup! *(They all stare at him, and he smiles.)* What? *(Chad enters.)*

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

CHAD. Sorry I'm late. Practice.

ANDI. Hi Chad. Rae, as soon as I kiss you, you die.

RAE. Cool.

CHAD. Looks like I came in at the right time. (The girls glare at him.)
What? (To Joe.) What'd I say?

JOE. I don't know. They did that to me too.

ANDI. (*Placing the basket on the ground in front of her.*) So, I say the
Give me my robe, put on my crown speech, that's where I kiss you both.
Rae dies right away, and then Summer says her line.

SUMMER. Dissolve thick cloud, & rain, that I may say the Gods
themselves do weep.

ANDI. This proves me base: if she first meet the curled Anthony, he'll
make demand of her, and spend that kiss which is my heaven to have.
Come thou mortal wretch, (*Takes out the asp and applies it to her breast.*)
with thy sharp teeth this knot intricate, of life at once untie: poor
venomous fool, be angry, and dispatch. Oh could'st thou speak, that I
might hear thee call great Caesar ass, unpolicied.

SUMMER. Oh Eastern star.

ANDI. Peace, peace: dost thou not see my baby at my breast, that sucks
the nurse asleep.

SUMMER. O break! O break!

ANDI. As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle. O Anthony! Nay I will
take thee too. What should I stay. (*She dies.*) Well, what do you think?

RAE. I think it was awesome!

SUMMER. Oh, the love was there. I could feel you dying for Anthony's
love. It was beautiful.

CHAD. Really good, Andi.

ANDI. Joe?

JOE. What?

ANDI. D'ya think I got the mood?

JOE. Food? No thank you. I'm not hungry.

SUMMER. MOOD, HOW WAS HER SCENE?

JOE. Oh. Looked great!

ANDI. Thanks. (*Picks up her papers.*) Who's next?

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

JOE. Oh. O.K. I am. I'm doing the Edmund, Edgar duel at the end of King Lear. Chad's doing it with me.

CHAD. All right. Whatya got?

JOE. Edmund is the traitorous villain, and Edgar challenges him to single combat.

CHAD. Single combat?

JOE. Yes. It is to prove Edmund a traitor. Prior to the duel, Edmund's herald reads a challenge to the army. He challenges his own brother to a duel.

CHAD. Oh, so there's some sort of sibling rivalry going on. And they're gonna to fight to the death over it? Brothers?

JOE. Mothers? No, the mothers aren't in this.

CHAD. I said BROTHERS. (*loudly.*) The BROTHERS are going to FIGHT to the DEATH over this?

JOE. Oh. Yes. It is the honor of the family name for Edgar, and power for Edmund.

CHAD. Gotcha. O.K. So I say: In wisdom I should ask thy name, but since thy out-side looks so faire and warlike, and that thy tongue, some say, of breeding reathes, what safe, and nicely I might well delay, By rule of knight-hood, I disdain and spurn: back do I toss these treasons to thy head, with the hell-hated lie, o'er-whelm thy heart, which for they yet glance by, and scarcely bruise, this sword of mine shall give them instant way, where they shall rest for ever. (*They begin some swordfighting choreography.*)

JOE. Then we do this.

CHAD. I can do this.

JOE. Good. I'll do this.

CHAD. How 'bout I die this way?

JOE. Oh, good. I like it. We can do the rest of the fight later. Who's next?

RAE. (*She pronounces Iago as Eye-Ah-Go*) I'm going to do Emelia's death. Once she finds Desdemona dead, she can't bear the burden of her husband's deceit and treachery any longer and tells everything she knows—even though she knows Iago will kill her for it. It's really powerful and shows how much love Emelia had for Desdemona. The purity of the reputation of one she loved was more important to her than her own life. I

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

had to cut the scene to make it just Emelia and Iago because I don't have time to get other people ready for the other roles.

ANDI. That sounds cool. Let's see it.

RAE. Joe, do you have your lines for Iago?

JOE. You have to go! Now?

RAE. No. Joe, IAGO, do you have your lines for IAGO? Did you learn them?

JOE. Oh, Iago. (*Pronounced correctly.*) Are we doing that now?

RAE. Yes. But we're just gonna kind of run through it.

JOE. O.K.

RAE. I'll start the scene on Emelia's line: Oh, are you come, Iago: you have done well.

JOE. O.K.

RAE. You kill me after I say: By Heaven I do not, I do not Gentlemen: oh murd'rous coxcomb, what should such a fool do with so good a wife?

JOE. O.K.

RAE. (*She takes him by the arm and speaks the following lines close to his ear.*) You'll be here, having crept closer to me throughout the scene. On your line "Filth, thou liest.", you stab me with your dagger. So, if the audience is going to be roughly there, you'll have to stab me like this so they can't see. (*They work out the stab with a dowel for the dagger.*)

JOE. O.K.

RAE. Joe, listen very carefully to what I am saying in the scene, so you don't miss your lines, O.K.?

JOE. O.K. Don't worry about me.

RAE. That's what we're doing. Summer, wanna do yours?

SUMMER. Yeah. I'm doing Ophelia's suicide.

RAE. That's offstage isn't it?

SUMMER. Yeah. She falls into a river and doesn't try to save herself. So, they call it a "suicide".

ANDI. But wasn't she kind of insane at the time?

SUMMER. Yeah. After Hamlet dumped her and killed her father she went kind of nuts. That's why she didn't try to swim to the bank. I'm going to sing the song she sings before she exits for the last time. Then I'm going to

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

mime falling into the river. Then I'm going to wrap myself in this fisherman's net and mime drowning.

RAE. A fishing net?

SUMMER. Yeah. It represents all of the dolphins killed by fisherman's nets.

RAE. Didn't the prof warn you not to do that?

SUMMER. I don't have to explain it. It will be a subliminal message. But I'm going to have Ophelia screaming as she drowns so it'll make it clear to the audience.

ANDI. Well...let's see it.

SUMMER. They bore him bare fac'd on the bier, Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny: And on his grave rains many a tear, Fare you well my dove. And will he not come again, And will he not come again: No, no, he is dead, go to thy death-bed, He never will come again. His beard as white as snow, All flaxen was his pole: He is gone, he is gone, and we cast away moan, Gramercy on his soul. *(She mimes falling into the water and wraps herself up in the net. She screams in such a way that it sounds like dolphin speech.)*EEEE! EEEE! EEEE! EEEE! EEEEE!

JOE. *(Holds his ears.)* Good God! What the hell was that?

SUMMER. That's the end of my scene. *(They all stare at each other.)*

SCENE 5

This scene takes place in the classroom. Students enter, followed by the professor. Rae is listening and singing along to her iPod. It is the same song as in the opening.

SAM. *(To Rae.)* Get a new album.

PROF. All right class, today is your last day of rehearsal. Are there any questions before you begin?

CHAD. Dr. G., I'd like to do the death of Young Siward and set it in Afghanistan. Would you mind? *(NOTE: You may update this to whatever war we are currently experiencing).*

PROF. Chad, did I not already say that modernizing was unacceptable? I thought I was very clear on that point.

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

CHAD. Can I tell you why first?

PROF. No. I'm sorry Chad. No modernizing. *(He exits USR briefly, then returns to hang in the doorway and overhear Chad's monologue.)*

STUDENTS. *(As the professor is leaving.)* Let him tell you. Come on Dr. G. At least hear it. etc. Tell us anyway.

CHAD. I don't know how much of a concept it is, but see, my brother was in a unit over there. They were doing a walk-through of a city and got ambushed. Brian's gun jammed, so he dove through a door into a building he was taking cover behind. Once he got in, he saw an enemy soldier setting up a bomb. It apparently was big enough to take out enough of the area to kill his whole unit. The soldier was huge and Brian, he was only 18. He'd never actually fought anyone hand to hand before for real. He drew his knife and went at him. He held him off long enough for his unit to track him down. When they busted in the room, they shot the soldier and found Brian dead on the ground. They dismantled the bomb. Brian's sacrifice saved all of 'em. I'm pretty sure he knew when he attacked that guy that he was going to die doing it. But he had to. He had to do what was right, and what was best for his unit. I think Siward does that when he meets Macbeth and finds out who he is. He knows he'll die, but he has to fight him in hopes of beating him for the good of the cause. So, I kinda wanted to do that scene as a knife fight, set in that place, ya know, to sort of honor him for what he did. Does that sound corny?

PROF. *(Pause.)* No, Chad. It does not. I am so sorry. *(To the students.)* It would be a privilege for us to have that scene in this production. Don't you think? *(Chad hugs Prof., and Prof. seems rather stiff, but finally gives Chad a few somewhat uncomfortable pats on the back in the embrace.)*

Now, if you'll excuse me, Sheri and Tara, I believe you have asked me to look at your scene again? I have the room next to us open. *(To Chad.)* If there's anything you need... *(The professor, Sheri and Tara exit.)*

ANDI. I'm so sorry Chad. I never knew.

CHAD. S'alright. Not like I was plannin' on tellin' everybody.

RAE. That was a noble death. I think your tribute will be very fitting.

CHAD. Thanks, Rae. Ya know, I miss him. a lot. But I am so proud of what he did. He was given a medal of honor and considered one of the best examples of a soldier by his unit. It doesn't bring him back, and it doesn't

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

make the pain go away, but I can think about him and be proud to be his brother...if that makes any sense.

RANDI. It makes a lot of sense. Oddly enough, I think that's what a lot of the deaths in Shakespeare's plays were all about. Not fearing death, so long as it is in some honorable manner. Brian didn't fear it. He did what he had to do, and there was honor in that death. The deaths that are really terrible are the murders. There's no honor there. Not in Shakespeare. Not anywhere.

CHAD. Yeah. I guess so.

SUMMER. What are you talking about Andi? What do you think all the deaths in the wars are? Murders! Leaders of nations murdering their soldiers. There's no good reason for wars other than to fill rich men's pockets. *(Chad is becoming obviously upset.)*

DREW. Summer, Brian was fighting for his country. It was a belief he was willing to die for. That's what a noble death is all about- dying for your beliefs. Brian died in the noblest way any character of Shakespeare's could ever hope to. Your stupid political views can't rob him of that.

SUMMER. That's not what I meant. Chad, I'm sorry. I didn't mean it as any kind of bash on your brother. I just don't think he should ever have been sent there.

CHAD. Yeah, I know.

JERRI. Dude. Buzz-kill man. This death stuff is bringin' me down.

BOB. No doubt.

CHAD. I'll need some people to be in my scene. *(Both geeks raise their hands and jump up and down, calling to Chad, desperate to be in his scene.)* Joe, would you play the enemy soldier?

JOE. I'll be happy to.

CHAD. *(Looks at Andi, who nods 'yes')* Thanks.

CHIP. If you don't mind, I'd be especially honored to play Brian...unless you wanted to yourself.

CHAD. No. Thanks Chip. I don't know that I could do that. It's a bit too close to home. I'd like you to play him.

ANDI. We'll help you with costumes or anything else you need.

RANDI. Yeah, anything.

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

CHAD. Thanks everyone. Do you think we could go to my dorm to rehearse? We've got, what, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday? Do you guys have the time?

JOE. Sure Chad. I'm free right now. Rae, are we rehearsing tonight?

RAE. Yup. 7:00.

CHIP. Let me see if Kristin wants to rehearse our Romeo and Juliet scene first. *(He crosses to her and before he speaks, she slaps him. Taking the spin of his body caused by her slap to redirect him back to Chad.)* Guess I'm free. Let's go.

CHAD. Thanks everyone. *(Chad, Chip and Joe exit. Kristin exits separately. The others, except for Miron and Allister pair off to go rehearse their scenes. Ad lib dialogue on the way out.)*

MIRON. O.K. The professor said that we could use the room. We're doing the Macbeth, Macduff fight scene.

ALLISTER. Good. Which one am I?

MIRON. You will be Rebel leader Macduff, and I will be Emperor Macbeth of the Empire.

ALLISTER. Awesome.

MIRON. You enter first. Here's your lines.

ALLISTER. Turn Hell-hound, turn.

MIRON. Of all men else I have avoided thee:

ALLISTER. Could you say: of all *rebels* else I have avoided thee?

MIRON. No. The professor doesn't want us to change lines, remember?

ALLISTER. O.K. I have no words, my voice is in my sword,

MIRON. Does your sword wear a retainer too?

ALLISTER. That's not funny Miron. *(He continues.)* My voice is in my sword, thou bloodier villain than terms can give thee out. *(They begin to work out some fight sequences.)*

MIRON. Thou loosest labor. As easy may'st thou the intrenchant air with thy keen sword impress, as make me bleed: let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests, I bear a charmed life, which must not yield to one of woman born.

ALLISTER. It would be so much better if you could say: Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests, I am stronger in the force than you.

MIRON. I know, but we can't.

ALLISTER. O.K. We should fight some more after I say: Untimely rip't.

THE MANY DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE

MIRON. Great. I'll stop on: I'll not fight with thee. Man, this is just like the last chapter of Targon five, where Lanatar finds out that the alien he's fighting is the one that the prophecy says will defeat him.

ALLISTER. Well thanks for that! I guess I don't have to finish that book now!

MIRON. Sorry.

ALLISTER. We should start again when I say: Here may you see the tyrant.

MIRON. No, I think we should start again after I say: Lay on Macduff, And damn'd be him, that first cries hold, enough.

ALLISTER. It'd be so much cooler if you could say: Lay on Rebel Leader Macduff.

MIRON. I know, but the prof'll get pissed. We can't change the text. Let's just work out the fight sections there. *(They work out some more fight sequences.)*

ALLISTER. This looks good.

MIRON. What kind of costumes do we have to have for this? Did he have any specifications, like with the text?

ALLISTER. No. Not really. He didn't say anything about that.

MIRON. Cool! Wait here. I've got my costume. *(He runs offstage left and returns in a full Darth Vader costume.)*

ALLISTER. Yeah!

END ACT 1

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