

Much ado about Will

Version 17

The auditorium is in darkness as the sound of a muffled bell tolling followed by cart wheels on a cobbled street, the murmur of voices interspersed with cries of "bring out your dead" etc A trumpet sounds. Spot on stage left revealing a sleeping man dressed in Elizabethan costumes sitting in a chair. As the trumpet dies away he awakens, rises & speaks.

Kemp Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises,
 Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.
 Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
 Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices
 That, if I then had wak'd after long sleep,
 Will make me sleep again; and then, in dreaming,
 The clouds methought would open and show riches
 Ready to drop upon me, that, when I wak'd,
 I cried to dream again.

Blackout. Full stage lights as the band plays intro. The cast enter and sing. As they perform Kemp for a time watches and then walks around and between them as they dance. They do not see him. He moves to up stage centre and stands behind a woman who freezes as the rest continue the number.

Brush Up Your Shakespeare Cole Porter

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPduoU826ew>

The girls today in society
 Go for classical poetry,
 So to win their hearts one must quote with ease
 Aeschylus and Euripides.
 But the poet of them all
 Who will start 'em simply ravin'
 Is the poet people call
 The bard of Stratford-on-Avon.

Brush up your Shakespeare,
 Start quoting him now.
 Brush up your Shakespeare
 And the women you will wow.
 Just declaim a few lines from "Othella"
 And they think you're a heckuva fella.

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If your blonde won't respond when you flatter 'er
Tell her what Tony told Cleopaterer,

And if still, to be shocked, she pretends well,
Just remind her that "All's Well That Ends Well."

Brush up your Shakespeare
And they'll all kowtow.

Brush up your Shakespeare,
Start quoting him now.
Brush up your Shakespeare
And the women you will wow.

If your goil is a Washington Heights dream
Treat the kid to "A Midsummer Night Dream."
If she fights when her clothes you are mussing,
What are clothes? "Much Ado About Nussing."
If she says your behavior is heinous
Kick her right in the "Coriolanus."

Brush up your Shakespeare
And they'll all kowtow,
And they'll all kowtow,
And they'll all kowtow.

Brush up your Shakespeare,
Start quoting him now.
Brush up your Shakespeare
And the women you will wow.
Brush up your Shakespeare
And they'll all kowtow.

The cast take a bow and exit leaving the Man and Woman upstage centre.

Woman T'es qui, toi? Ecoute, je ne sais pas ce que tu fais ici mais veux-tu te tirer? Ceci est une répétition générale et on peut très bien se passer d'un petit génie qui fout la pagaille, merci beaucoup!

Kemp Forgive me Madam, but your words fall on untutored ears!

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- Woman Ah! Mais c'est parfait, ça! Un gentleman anglais à la perfection! Si j'avais su on t'aurait réservé un très beau rôle mais vu que c'est demain la première je t'invite à bien vouloir me foutre le camp!
- Kemp Alas, your tone suggests that my presence does not please but I assure you I mean no disrespect. *Pause* I remember I was rehearsing Caliban's speech. Then*suddenly realising* there was the light..... neither candles nor day butthat. *He indicates the spot.* The music, the dancers, the apparel so very strange. I pray you tell me what place is this or do I but dream?
- Woman Ils ne t'ont pas vu, n'est-ce pas? Tu es passé entre nous et personne ne t'a prêté la moindre attention... Mais moi, je t'ai bel et bien vu et je te vois toujours. Ouatte - is - yore - nème!?
- Kemp My name, Madam, is William Kemp, an actor late of the Lord Chamberlain's Men. But for this foul plague the day would find me at the Globe portraying Grumio in Will's new play *The Taming of the Shrew*.. though in faith had I had my way, I'd have been the hero, Petruchio but no, always the fool *sighs*...come follow! *He exits*
- Woman C'est moi qui dois rêver! *Exits following him*
BLACKOUT SOUNDS FULL LIGHTS

The Taming of the Shrew Act 2 Scene 1*Enter* PETRUCHIO

I will attend her here,
 And woo her with some spirit when she comes.
 Say that she rail; why then I'll tell her plain
 She sings as sweetly as a nightingale:

But here she comes; and now, Petruchio, speak.

Enter KATHARINA

Good morrow, Kate; for that's your name, I hear.

KATHARINA

Well have you heard, but something hard of hearing:
 They call me Katharina that do talk of me.

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You lie, in faith; for you are call'd plain Kate,
And bonny Kate and sometimes Kate the curst;
But Kate, the prettiest Kate in Christendom
Kate of Kate Hall, my super-dainty Kate.
Hearing thy mildness praised in every town,
Thy virtues spoke of, and thy beauty sounded,
Yet not so deeply as to thee belongs,
Myself am moved to woo thee for my wife.

KATHARINA

Moved! in good time: let him that moved you hither
Remove you hence: I knew you at the first
You were a moveable.

PETRUCHIO

Why, what's a moveable?

KATHARINA

A join'd-stool.

PETRUCHIO

Thou hast hit it: come, sit on me.

KATHARINA

Asses are made to bear, and so are you.

PETRUCHIO

Women are made to bear, and so are you.

KATHARINA

No such jade as you, if me you mean.

PETRUCHIO

Alas! good Kate, I will not burden thee;
For, knowing thee to be but young and light--

KATHARINA

Too light for such a swain as you to catch;
And yet as heavy as my weight should be.

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PETRUCHIO

Come, come, you wasp; i' faith, you are too angry.

KATHARINA

If I be waspish, best beware my sting.

PETRUCHIO

My remedy is then, to pluck it out.

KATHARINA

Ay, if the fool could find it where it lies,

PETRUCHIO

Who knows not where a wasp does
wear his sting? In his tail.

KATHARINA

In his tongue.

PETRUCHIO

Whose tongue?

KATHARINA

Yours, if you talk of tails: and so farewell.

PETRUCHIO

What, with my tongue in your tail? nay, come again,
Good Kate; I am a gentleman.

KATHARINA

That I'll try.

She strikes him

PETRUCHIO

I swear I'll cuff you, if you strike again.

KATHARINA

So may you lose your arms:
If you strike me, you are no gentleman;
And if no gentleman, why then no arms.

PETRUCHIO

A herald, Kate? O, put me in thy books!

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What is your crest? a coxcomb?

PETRUCHIO

A combless cock, so Kate will be my hen.

KATHARINA

No cock of mine; you crow too like a craven.

PETRUCHIO

Nay, come, Kate, come; you must not look so sour.

KATHARINA

It is my fashion, when I see a crab.

PETRUCHIO

Why, here's no crab; and therefore look not sour.

KATHARINA

There is, there is.

PETRUCHIO

Then show it me.

KATHARINA

Had I a glass, I would.

PETRUCHIO

What, you mean my face?

KATHARINA

Well aim'd of such a young one.

PETRUCHIO

Now, by Saint George, I am too young for you.

KATHARINA

Yet you are wither'd.

PETRUCHIO

'Tis with cares.

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KATHARINA

I care not.

PETRUCHIO

Nay, hear you, Kate: in sooth you scape not so.

KATHARINA

I chafe you, if I tarry: let me go.

PETRUCHIO

No, not a whit: I find you passing gentle.

'Twas told me you were rough and coy and sullen,

And now I find report a very liar;

For thou are pleasant, gamesome, passing courteous,

But slow in speech, yet sweet as spring-time flowers:

Thou canst not frown, thou canst not look askance,

Nor bite the lip, as angry wenches will,

Nor hast thou pleasure to be cross in talk,

But thou with mildness entertain'st thy wooers,

With gentle conference, soft and affable.

Why does the world report that Kate doth limp?

O slanderous world! Kate like the hazel-twigg

Is straight and slender and as brown in hue

As hazel nuts and sweeter than the kernels.

O, let me see thee walk: thou dost not halt.

KATHARINA

Go, fool, and whom thou keep'st command. *Exits BLACKOUT.....***THIS SCEPTER'D ISLE Simon Palmer***Spots centre stage Kemp and Woman enter*

Woman Alors selon toi il ne t'a jamais donné un rôle digne de tes talents?

Kemp Did he ever? Trouble is, when you're the funny man, no-one takes you seriously, and he knows that. Mark you, there was that one time...

Woman Dis-moi...

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Kemp Well, it was a real emergency one night. In was *Richard II*: the actor playing John of Gaunt took sick and I had to go on. You know the great John of Gaunt speech?

Woman Non, connais pas. Dis-le-moi.

Kemp Course you know it. Everybody knows it. (*Clears throat*)

This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
 This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
 This other Eden, demi-paradise,
 This fortress built by Nature for herself
 Against infection and the hand of war,
 This happy breed of men, this little world,
 This precious stone set in the silver sea,
 Which serves it in the office of a wall,
 Or as a moat defensive to a house,
 Against the envy of less happier lands,
 This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
 This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land,
 Dear for her reputation through the world,
 Is now leased out, I die pronouncing it,
 Like to a tenement or pelting farm:
 England, bound in with the triumphant sea
 Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege
 Of watery Neptune, is now bound in with shame,
 With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds:
 That England, that was wont to conquer others,
 Hath made a shameful conquest of itself.

Woman Mais c'est extraordinaire, ça! Ils ont aimé bien sûr?

Kemp They laughed. *BLACKOUT*

We Three Olwen Wymark

Characters EM, BRIDIE, GIRL, A renowned TV COOK

The stage is bare. Em enters rather out of breath. She is an old lady. She has a grey blanket folded over one arm.

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EM I'm here. I'm sorry I'm late - Oh! *Looks round* Odd! *She puts down the blanket & looks round* Nobody. I don't understand this. I suppose it is the right place..... Of course it is. *The sound of wind and the crows squawking.* Oh do be quiet! *Silence* I should think so. Well there's nothing I can do. I shall just have to wait. It's not good enough. I shall say something. I shall certainly speak. Yes. There are times when I think I'll give all this up. Just give it up. Give it up. *The sound of wind and the crows rises again and then subsides.* Heigh ho!

A figure in a black cloak and a terrifying mask enters.

EM The mask's awfully common.
 BRIDIE Oh ...common? Do you think? I thought it was rather exciting.
 EM Well it didn't excite me.
 BRIDIE You're so conservative, Em. What about the feathers? Not bad, eh?
 EM Always so fancy Bridie. You wear something different every time.
 BRIDIE Well it makes a change. I should think you'd get sick of your grey. I get so bored!
 EM We all get bored, Bridie.
 BRIDIE Where's Mollie?
 EM Not here.
 BRIDIE What? She must be.
 EM Well she's not.
 BRIDIE But she's always the first. Always. What can it mean?
 EM She's been behaving very strangely lately.
 BRIDIE Yes, she has. Last time.....did you notice....she kept leaving things out.
 EM Of course I noticed. I lost my place twice.
 BRIDIE Did you say anything to her?
 EM No, but I will this time
 BRIDIE I wouldn't dare.
 EM I'm not afraid of her.
 BRIDIE You are.
 EM I shall give her a piece of my mind.
 BRIDIE If she comes.
 EM She's bound to come.
 BRIDIE Yes.....Em.....
 EM Yes?
 BRIDIE Just supposing.....I mean I know it won't happen, but just supposing.....
 EM Yes?
 BRIDIE Well if by any chance she didn't turn up at all would we have to carry on today anyway?
 EM How could we? There have to be three.
 BRIDIE We could just go then, could we?

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EM I don't know. I suppose so.....yes.
 BRIDIE Em! We could retire!
 EM Ssssssh! You don't really think we could?
 BRIDIE I don't see why not. If the Rule's been broken.....oh Em....think of it?
 What would you do?
 EM I've always fancied a little ferret farm. A few stoats...weasles.
 BRIDIE Too quiet for me. I'd travel round the fairs telling fortunes. I'd be rich.
 EM Go commercial? I'm sure that wouldn't be allowed.
 BRIDIE Why not? Don't you see, EM? We could do whatever we like. We'd be free!

There's a singing cry from off stage.

BRIDIE What's that?
 EM I don't know.
 BRIDIE You don't think it's Mollie? What if she heard us?

The cry comes again.

EM Don't be ridiculous. That's right out of Mollie's range. She's a baritone.
 BRIDIE There's someone coming.
 EM Quick Bridie hide!. We can't have strangers seeing you dressed like that.
Picks up Bridie's mask and hands it to her. Hide!
 BRIDIE Where?
 EM Here. Get under this.

Unfolds blanket. Bridie gets down on all fours and Em throws blanket over her and sits on her. A Girl enters dresses in rags.

GIRL Hello, Missus.
 EM Good afternoon.
 GIRL Have you seen my goat?
 EM No I haven't.
 GIRL It came this way. Didn't you hear it singing?
 EM Goats don't sing.
 GIRL Mine does. Give us something to eat, Missus. Give us some food.
 EM I haven't got any food. Run along now. There's a good girl.
 GIRL Why are you sitting on her?
 EM I beg your pardon?
 GIRL Bridie.

Bridie stands up suddenly and Em falls off.

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BRIDIE Who are you?
 GIRL I come from Mollie's house.
 EM What do you mean?
 GIRL We got there in the middle of the night, the goat and me. We waited all night in the hedge till the sun came up. All red the sun was in the filthy air.
 EM Yes.
 GIRL Then the goat sang and I called "Mollie"! "Mollie" !. Not a sound came from the house. Nothing.
 EM Nothing.
 GIRL There was an ape on the roof. A big grey ape. He stared at us. But then the goat sang again and I laughed and the ape swung down off the roof and ran away. We saw him leaping over the hedge until he was gone.
 E & B Yes
 GIRL I went into the house. I searched. When I opened the cupboards swarms of dragon flies flew out. And bats. Thousands of them humming and squeaking and then out of the window like a cloud.
 E & B Yes.
 GIRL The fireplace was full of dead lizards.....She's gone. She'll never come back now.
 EM She'll never come back
 BRIDIE We can go.
 EM It's finished.
 BRIDIE We can go.
 EM We're free!
 BRIDIE Free!
 GIRL Stop! Fools. It isn't finished. It's beginning again. You'll do what I say now.
 BRIDIE I don't believe you!
 GIRL No? Dance, Bridie.
 EM Bridie don't! Stop
 BRIDIE *Dancing* I can't! I can't
 GIRL Yes, you can.
 EM It isn't beginning again. It can't be. You're lying!
 GIRL Am I? Watch out, Em!

Em cries out and clutches the fur piece round her neck. She wrenches it off and throws it on the ground. The Girl stamps on it savagely.

GIRL It's dead now.
 EM It wasn't alive.
 GIRL It bit you. Get ready. Collect your stuff. Quick! She'll be coming soon.

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They scurry about collecting their props. They stand in a half circle facing front. The Girl in the middle.

GIRL Ready? Now! *She flings out her arms*

Blackout. Wind howls, crows square etc. Lights up

Macbeth Act 4 Scene 1

1st WITCH (EM)

Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.

2nd WITCH (BRIDIE)

Thrice and once the hedge-pig whined.

3rd WITCH (GIRL)

Harpier cries 'Tis time, 'tis time.

ALL

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

1st WITCH

Toad, that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty-one
Swelter'd venom sleeping got,
Boil thou first i' the charmed pot.

ALL

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

A woman looking not unlike Mary Berry enters. The witches stare

MARY

And welcome to tonight's edition of Cookery for All. This evening we're in Perthshire to discover three very special ladies who spend much of their time foraging for nature's bounty. Unusually, this evening we're not in our "cookery for all" kitchen but out here out on Dunsinane Heath enjoying the fresh air and an unusual aroma from a very large pot. Now tell me, ladies, what's cooking?

2nd WITCH

Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake;

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2nd WITCH Eye of newt and toe of frog,

MARY Alas, it appears that this is not a dish for our vegetarian friends.

3rd WITCH

Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,

MARY Oh dear I'm not sure a dog's tongue is even legal!

1st WITCH

Lizard's leg and owlet's wing,

MARY The wing of a baby owl? No..... no! I, who but one year since, was honoured by her gracious Majesty, patron of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, cannot be seen to be embroiled in such a recipe.... I will be.....*blowing her nose and overcome with emotion*

1st WITCH *With utmost patience*

Lizard's leg and owlet's wing,
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

MARY divested of my Dame-hood! *exiting tearfully*

ALL

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

3rd WITCH

Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witches' mummy, maw and gulf
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,
Root of hemlock digg'd i' the dark,
Liver of a blaspheming(*unspoken Jew*)

MARY *Returning* Stop, stop! Please don't add anti-semitism to this outrage!

Blackout MUSIC

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Will, Walt and 'ER majesty - Bridget O'Loughlin

The date is 28 December 1594, William Shakespeare is sitting at a desk, scratching away with his quill. It isn't working very well so he is getting frustrated and ends up knocking the ink pot over – causing a puddle to form on the floor. A blast of trumpets Enter Queen Elizabeth in regal pomp behind her, Sir Walter Raleigh scurries in and darts ahead of her to lay his cloak over the ink puddle before she steps in it.

Will: Your grace! My gracious liege! What make you here?
 And you, my good Sir Walter Raleigh, welcome sir!
 But fear you not this fierce and bitter wind
 That pins indoors the aged and the weak?

'ER: One doesn't do weakness, nor old age - as long as Walt is ready with his cloak one can handle any weather. One is bestowing this visit in order to command you to perform your new play at the Court tonight... I believe it is called "The Comedy of Errors"

Will: Alas, Madam, this night we are bespoke
 To certain lawyers gather'd at Gray's Inn
 Whom to disappoint I should not dare
 For fear that law's sharp edge might find me out.

'ER: It is a command – and such productions will henceforth be known as a "Royal Command Performance"

Will: Thus, Majesty, your servant shall obey;
 If Gray's Inn sues, I'll shift to be ... away!

'ER: While one is at it one wishes to know why you have not written any plays about one. After all you went on at a mighty great length about all the Henry's - Henry IV Parts 1 and 2, Henry V, Henry VI, parts 1,2, AND 3, and even my own dear old Dad, Henry VIII (perhaps Walt could burst into a verse of "I'm Eney the Eighth I am, stopping when he notices ER glowering at him)

Will: What? Write the history of a living Prince?
 I beg Your Majesty may think again!
 An enterprise with nought but peril fraught!
 What if some hint of sin should come to light?
 Some bed besmirch'd, or infant born unbid?

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Will: No, monarchs dead and buried are fair game,
Your playwright, Ma'am, prefers to keep his head!

'ER: But you could make millions, draw in crowd after crowd if you were to serialise one's life and one's reign over the course of many plays – I have even thought of a title for this series of masterpieces – *with a flourish, and perhaps a trumpet* "The Crown"

Will: Without a bit of spice, a play won't sell;
Tickets are sold by lust, the flames of Hell!
That's the stuff to bring the punters in
Their chiefest joys are comedy - and sin.

'ER: *sighs* Very well then, one shall just have to make do with being remembered as the greatest monarch in all of history – under whose reign America was discovered.

Walt: *in a loud whisper* Actually, Your Majesty, technically old Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492 (you know, 'in 14 hundred and ninety two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue) – although of course some claim that it was first discovered by Amerigo de Vespucci, who was Italian and Spanish (and old Christopher was Italian, but working for the Spaniards) and therefore the discovery was not under your reign nor indeed anything to do with England and of course there are those who say that the very first discovery of America (apart from the first nations people who came from Mongolia), were the Vikings and indeed.... *here he trails off as he realises that ER is yet again looking at him with murderous intent*

'ER: But Walt does have some interesting news for us – from the colonies – they have made a discovery – what was it again Walt? No, not the turkeys Walt, one keeps telling you, that's not a British holiday, the other thing – something to do with dried leaves??

Will: Dried leaves! (To Walt) What stuff is this, Sir knight?
No lack of them in England at year's end!
You sweep them neatly up betimes, and then
The morrow morn the leaves are back again.

Walt: No not that kind of a leaf – these are special – you see they are grown on plants and then harvested and then hung out to dry and then, they are shredded up and, wait for it, you roll them up in a piece of paper and

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'ER: Get this Will, you put it into your mouth... and
Walt: set fire to it!!!
– and then you suck in the smoke

Will: 'Tis passing strange - a fire beneath your nose!
Slim chance these leaves of yours will be a hit
Unless they get you high? No, that's not it...
...yet

Walt: How do you feel about potatoes, they are also from America?

Will: Thou say'st potatoes and I say earth apples,
Just give me tomatoes... What enchantment is this?
Are tomatoes a thing?

Meanwhile, ER has started to hum and bursts into :

'ER: Di di di di di America
Di di di di di, America,
Di di di di di America
Di di di di di America

Will Madam, these strains fall harshly on my ear
But music hath charms, or so it would appear
I'll turn musician and my pen I'll suit
To the lascivious pleasings of a lute!

'ER: For God's sakes Will, do you always have to speak in rhyming couplets; it does one's head in after while – especially when you use a word like “lute” when what you really need is “philharmonic orchestra”!

Will: *showing off his clothes* Madam, my verse may never make you smile!
These couplets, though, are central to my style;
So ingrained in me that you might say
I can't express myself in any other way...

'ER: Bloody hell, Will, you're worse than that Molliery chap from across the channel!!
One does wish you'd give over, and stop all this flannel!
Oh no, now one is speaking in rhyme – it must be catching
Come along Walt, one has plots that need hatching
Aaaargh it has one in its grip like the plague

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'ER: How to contain it? Better get off the stage

Voice Off: – or get a bloody vaccination!

Will stands and bows. ER and Walt leave with Walt darting around to try to lay his cloak down for every step she takes ?? cue in for a riff or two of “every step you take” Just before exiting ER stops and turns back to Will

'ER: One expects you and the Lord Chamberlain's Men at the Palace at 7 p.m., sharp, – and bugger the lawyers. Come along Walt.

Will sits again, sharpens his quill, realises he has no ink so takes out a pencil from his pocket and starts to write -

Will: Ah! Star crossed lovers, an enduring tale
Let's face it, never can get stale
But it is time to bring it up to date,
Set, I fancy, in an Italian state!

Blackout

A spot on Shakespeare seen writing at a desk down stage right. Followed by a spot down stage left into which walks William Kemp. Shakespeare pays no heed as Kemp looking across at Shakespeare speaks;

KEMP A pox on thee, Master Shakespeare!
Not e'en a bit part witch in your Scottish play.....
Aye, and a double pox and a treble, till your spear doth truly shake and then rot off!

WS But why, dear Will Kemp, sweet Will Kemp - dost thou accost me so? Why so curst?

Kemp Why so curst? Did ever man have more matter to curse withall than I?
I'll tell thee why, thou Swan of Avon: thou art no better than a dirty duck, a monster of ingratitude!

WS Ingratitude?

Kemp Aye! Hast heard of it:
'Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind

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Kemp As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.'

Remember? As You like It, Act II, scene 7.

WS Dear Will Kemp - sweet Will Kemp, thou art my muse of mirth,
my comical inspiration. My Dogberry, my Falstaff, my Bottom! With
what ingratitude dost thou tax me now?

Kemp My bottom indeed! And my arse to boot! There's no part writ for me...
no part!

Kemp exits downstage left. Will returns to his desk DSR and sits Left spot out .

Will and Juliet Hazel Breslin

WS: Come! *After knocking Juliet enters upstage left.*

J: Sorry to bother you, Will but I really need to talk to you about the Romeo script.

WS: Yes

J: Well, Will, to go straight to the point, I'm not at all happy with the text. For a start, you're typecasting the female characters. Last year it was the milksop Ophelia, mooning around and handing flowers to everyone; then drowning herself for love of that selfish guy with the Oedipus complex ...

WS: Hamlet?

J: Yes..... whoever. Now you've got me, falling in love with an adolescent I hardly know and ending up committing suicide because I can't face life without him. I mean don't you think your portrayals of woman are a teeny bit OTT, not to say insulting to women in general?

WS: Romeo and Juliet is a tragic love story....

J: *ignoring him* I mean, it's not like Romeo is even attractive! He's not old enough to shave, is pigeon-toed and has acne! He's only 15 for God's sake, Will.

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WS: So are you Juliet.

J: Yes, but I'm very mature for my age. I mean, if you could cast a real man in the part, it might seem a bit more realistic. Somebody like.... Mercutio. I wouldn't kick him out of my bridal chamber, but, honestly, this Romeo...

WS: I owe his father quite a lot of money ...

J: Ah! Say no more.... Anyway, I thought of a few different endings that wouldn't make me look like such a stupid, insipid little bitc...

WS: Juliet!

J: Sorry Will! But just listen, I really have some great ideas to make Juliet more interesting. Like: I don't kill myself, I'm terribly sad but finally I find consolation in the arms of an older man, who owns a tavern. He dies and I inherit the tavern and make a really good go of it. Most popular place in town, men come from miles to woo me but I reject them with great wit and good humour. I'm tough, with a sharp tongue, but with a heart of gold, like Beatrice, remember in Much Ado....

WS: It's already been done Jules, sorry.

J: Has it? Right! My next idea is even better! I don't die but I'm very sad, I withdraw from society and read a lot, study the law, I'm very clever and good at it, but women are not allowed to be lawyers, So I disguise myself as a man and defend the man I love in court most brilliantly...

WS: Balderdash, Jules! I've never heard such a stupid, unrealistic plot. Disguise yourself as a man, indeed! What about *he gestures to his chest* this part! Ha! A man, you!

J: Oh! I thought it was a rather good plot. OK, my next idea is to add a bit of gaiety - music and singing, you know. We keep your plot, where they both die tragically in the end but before that we liven it up with some singing and dancing.

WS: *In a strangled voice* Singing and dancing ...

J: Exactly! For example, the day Juliet first meets Romeo and falls in love, she's looking at herself in the mirror for the first time properly and she realises that she's quite attractive, and says to herself *bursts into song*....

Much ado about Will

Version 17

I feel pretty,
 Oh, so pretty,
 feel pretty and witty and bright!
 And I pity
 Any girl who isn't me tonight.
 I feel charming,
 Oh, so charming
 It's alarming how charming I feel!
 And so pretty
 That I hardly can believe I'm real.....

WS: Very pretty, Juliet but I've written a tragic love story

J: Then – to give another example – Romeo is back home and can't get Juliet off his mind, he keeps saying her name *bursts into song* Ju-lee-etta
male voice continues off stage

I've just met a girl named Julietta!
 And suddenly I've found
 How wonderful a sound can be!
 Julietta!
 Say it loud and there's music playing!
 Say it soft and it's almost like praying
 Julietta,
 I'll never stop saying
 Julietta! *male voice fades*

WS: I must protest. Singing is highly inappropriate for a tragedy set in Verona...

J: That's the whole point, Will, we don't set it in Italy at all but in another, less tragic country, like *she thinks for a while...* The AMERICAS

WS: What an aberration! Romeo and Juliet – my romantic tragedy set to music.....

J:and dancing! *She dances with a reluctant Will to WSS "America"*

WS: It's utterly unthinkable. *Returning to his chair*

J: You just wait, Will Shakespeare. It'll catch on one day, I bet ya!

Much ado about Will

Version 17

She flounces off. He sits and picks up his quill as he mutters to himself

WS: Disguises herself as a man eh! Not bad? Not *starts furiously scribbling.*
Blackout

PART 2

"But soft, what light?" David Crowe

The audience enters after the interval. When they are settled the house lights go down to half. (If necessary, add a very low light on the stage. The audience should be able to see the stage, but not be too aware of the lighting.)

Enter Stage Manager (SM).

SM: *Shades her eyes and looks up to the lighting desk.* Rob? You up there?

Rob: Of course! These lights don't run themselves, you know!

SM: Yeah, sorry, Rob. I didn't mean to suggest— I'm under some stress. The producer's arranged for that Will Shakespeare – you know, the guy from the past – to have a look at the theatre. Seems he's never seen one ... at least, not a theatre as we know it.

Rob: Well, now I come to think of it, I did see a guy in tights wandering around. But that's not exactly odd, you know? Men in tights is what theatre's all about, isn't it?

SM: Balding, little pointy beard?

Rob: Yeah, that's him. Hang on, there he is now!

Enter Will Shakespeare, writing on a piece of paper with a pencil. House lights dim subtly. WS looks up, sees the SM.

WS: Ah, 'tis a marvellous thing this (shows the pencil) ... how is it called?
A penicillin?

SM: Pencil. Penicillin is ... Never mind. Er, Mr Shakespeare, I presume?

WS: Oh, stand thee not on formalities. Thou canst call me Will. After all, are we not all theatrical players together?

Much ado about Will

Version 17

SM: Kind of, I guess. Izzy's the name. Stage manager. It's my job to take the blame every time the actors make a bollocks of things. Put it there.

WS: *Hesitatingly shakes her hand. Aside.*
Her speech is strange; yet can I comprehend.
The English tongue evolveth over time.

SM: You're telling me. So, Will, this is your first time in a modern theatre?

WS: Indeed it is. And (looking around) wondrous to behold.
I fain would learn the ropes of this strange world.

SM: "Learn the ropes?" You've twigged the lingo already!
Blank look from WS. But tell me, do you always speak in verse?
Now look, you've got me doing it now!

WS: I tend to; scansion's in my blood, you see.
But thou canst disregard it; after all,
It seemeth that the art is lost today.
But now to business: answer this, I pray.
To himself. Think prose, Will, think prose. *To SM.* Thou sayest that the dramatic representations take place often after nightfall?

SM: That's right.

WS: Then the public must miss much of what the players do on stage, in the gloom.

SM: You must be joking, mate. Rob – can we have full lights?
Stage lights on full.

WS: Egad, what miracle is this?

SM: That's nothing, pal. You should see some of the rigs. Strobes, lasers, follow-spots, you name it.

WS: Thy tongue uttereth strange words. 'Tis no matter. But, prithee, tell me: where are the groundlings?

SM: Groundlings? Oh, you mean the punters? House lights, Rob!
Lights up on audience.

WS: But they be all seated! Are they not like to fall asleep?

Much ado about Will

Version 17

SM: To be honest, depends on the piece. You should hear the snoring during some of these endless soliloquies! *To be continued. DC*

Screaming Prince Hamlet Blues Simon Palmer*Spot on the band***BAND LEADER**

You may not know this but Hamlet is a play that has launched a thousand songs that live in everybody's memory: think of South Pacific:

“There is nothing like a Dane,
Nothing in the world.
There is nothing you can name
That is anything like a Dane!”

Or, then again, Simon and Garfunkel:

“Ophelia, you're breaking my heart

You're shaking my confidence daily
Ophelia, I'm down on my knees /
I'm begging you please to come home...”

Here's a lesser-known one, one of my favourites. It tells the Hamlet story through the slightly fuzzy lens of his cannabis habit:

SONG & GUITAR SOLO

I was smoking a joint on the castle wall
You know, the way you do
When in comes my Pa in a ghostly form
Saying “Son, I wuz lookin for you.”
You could see right through his ghostly form
And his voice was kinda queer.
He said “Son, I need ya to help me out
Cos I'm only made of air.”

“Now there's some stuff you need to know,
Gonna tell you that right now:
You know I died and you know when
But what you don't know is how.
One day when I was sleeping

Much ado about Will

Version 17

An' snoring loud and clear
 Your Uncle Claud gets some hebenon
 An' he pours it in my ear."

"So Uncle Claud gets it on with your Ma
 And that kinda makes him king,
 But my restless shade will know no rest
 Till he answers for this thing.
 I count on you for vengeance
 To set the the record right
 So I no longer have to roam
 his battlements at night."

With that he cried "Remember me!"
 And kinda disappeared.
 But what he'd said left me all shook up
 And feeling kinda weird.
 So I swore a solemn oath
 That Uncle Claud should die.
 By the time I'd finished swearing
 I couldn't remember why.

BAND LEADER

Ok now for something completely different ...well not different exactly.
 It's Hamlet again, folks but not as we know it. It's short, even shorter
 than Stoppard's five minute play but, ladies and gentlemen, can you spot
 the difference?

Full lights

Hamlet Backwards

from an idea of The Reduced Theatre Company

Enter Hamlet, Gertrude, Laertes, Ophelia and Polonius (who carries a blanket) they lie down. Hamlet, Gertrude & Laertes down stage left. Ophelia centre stage, Polonius upstage right. He arranges the blanket over his head and body. Horatio enters and kneels at Hamlet's side. Enter Fortinbras who walks to centre (below Ophelia) The following scene should be played in a very dramatically exaggerated manner

Fortinbras Go bid the soldiers shoot.

Horatio Good night, sweet prince. Quires of angels sing thee to thy rest.

Much ado about Will

Version 17

Hamlet I follow thee. The rest is silence.
 Gertrude O my dear Hamlet,--
 The drink, the drink! I am poison'd.
 Laertes O I am slain !
 Hamlet This is I, Hamlet the Dane. Give us the foils
 Laertes Hold off the earth
 Gertrude Sweet to the sweet
 Laertes Lay her in the earth
 Hamlet Alas poor Yorick.
 Laertes Sweet Ophelia!
 Ophelia *Drinks water from glass -gurgles.* Good night ladies. Good night sweet
 ladies. Good night. Good night.
 Laertes Were is my father?
 Hamlet Dead for a Ducat. Dead
 Polonius Help! Help!
 Gertrude What wilt thou do? Though wilt not murder me. Help!
 Hamlet How now Mother! What's the matter?
 Speak the speech trippingly on the tongue.....
 Get the to a nunnery.
 Ophelia Good my lord.
 Hamlet To be or not to be.....
 There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio.
 Horatio My lord, this is strange.
 Ghost OOOOOOh! I am thy father's spirit.
 Hamlet Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.
 Horatio My lord, I think I saw your father yesternight.
 Hamlet O that this too too solid flesh would melt
 Horatio Stand ho! Who is there?

*Blackout.***LA LANGUE DESimon Palmer**

Full lights. WS sits at a writing table, staring into space and chewing on the end of a quill.. Enter Kemp in a state of some excitement.

Kemp Awake, my friend, from thy brown reverie
 At hand there waits a lass would speak with thee!

WS A lass, say'st thou? What manner and what size?
 What of her raiment, figure, hair and eyes?

Much ado about Will

Version 17

- Kemp Accoutred like a man but slim and spare
 Much powdered on the face; long curly hair...
- WS Hath she a name?
- Kemp Ah, that I cannot tell.
 I fear I could not understand her well;
 She spoke so strangely I scarce caught a word
 But ... 'Molly' is the only name I heard.
- WS Molly, forsooth! (*Aside, musing*) A rose by any other name
 Would smell as sweet! There is no shame
 In such an appellation - many a flower
 Is born to blush unseen, and waste
 Its sweetness on the desert air!
- Kemp Will! How many times have I told you that it's wicked to
 plagiarise - particularly from poets who haven't been born yet! That's
 from Thomas Gray, who won't be born for a hundred years or so. He
 will wax elegiac in country churchyards. It sounds like you, but it's
 not.
- WS He's not been born yet - it's he will copy me.
- Kemp A judgement, Sir, we'll leave to history!
- WS Molly indeed! What sweet Bloom might this be
 Soliloquising on the Molly air?
 As when great Ulysses—

 (*Molière barges in, Kemp tries to deny him access*)
- Kemp Why, no, Madam!

 (*Molière haughtily brushes Kemp aside.*)
- Molière Monsieur! Dois-j'attendre ici devant cette porte
 Faut-il que je vous implore, ou même exhorte?
 Quoi? Moi, tant adoré des trois états de France
 Dois subir cette humiliation à outrance?
- Kemp I was adored once...

Much ado about Will

Version 17

- WS Peace, good Kemp!
To Molière, in an appalling English accent
 Pardonnez-moi, Seigneur!
 Mille bienvenues dans mon humble chombre
 Mal rangée comme elle est, et ... plutôt sombre.
 Triste mais mienne: un loft en maisonette...
 Oserai-je demander qui vous êtes?
- Molière Qui je suis? Ciel! Grands Dieux, quelle ignorance!
 Mon nom dépasse les frontières de France!
 Sachez alors, pour tout mettre bien au clair
 Je suis Jean-Baptiste Poquelin
WS and Kemp look at one another uncomprehendingly: "Who?"
 ...dit Molière!
- Kemp *Pause. Twigs - aside to WS* In fifty years, I see it come to pass,
 A king that sunshine farts from forth his arse
 Shall rule in France; this Molière
 Shall be his favourite - lauded everywhere.
- Molière *Ignoring him.* Maître Chat qu'expire, assez ! Laissez-moi, je vous prie
 Préciser la raison de ma présence ici !
 Car en effet c'est à travers le fil du temps
 Que je remonte ainsi pour vivre cet instant.
 Pourquoi? Pour tout vous dire, j'ai lu vos pièces :
 Rugueuses, mal structurées, sans délicatesse,
 Aristote, on dirait n'a jamais existé!
WS gestures in mute but vehement protest.
 Vos pièces pourtant si vivantes, empreintes d'humanité !
 La passion dans vos scènes, vos personnages,
 Les frissons qu'on ressent en feuilletant vos pages ! *WS mollified.*
 Comment faites-vous? Dites-moi la vérité:
With passion Comment se passer ainsi des trois unités ?
- WS Nature, my friend! Thy mirror let it be!
 Your Aristotle said that first, not I.
 If classical authority thou seek'st 'tis he,
 Rack not your brains to parrot Sophocles!
 What truthful tale could happen in one day
 Or in a single place? It cannot be.
 But 'autre pays, autres moeurs', you say;
 I for Southwark's commoners compose,
 You for the courts of kings do wield your pen.

Much ado about Will

Version 17

WS So poets both, both actors on the stage,
Our masters are the public, low or high!

Mais vous savez que j'ai écrit dans votre langage, n'est-ce pas? Oh oui, notamment dans ma historique pièce *Henri le cinquième*. C'est très amusant: après que les Anglais ont écrasé toute la française armée sans perdre plus de 36 hommes ? Et alors, le victorieux Roi Henry drague la française Princess - en français ? Non, vraiment, c'est tordant je vous assure ... *BLACKOUT*

Henry V Act 3 Scene 4

The FRENCH KING's palace. Enter KATHARINE and ALICE

KATHARINE Alice, tu as été en Angleterre, et tu parles bien le langage.

ALICE Un peu, madame.

KATHARINE Je te prie, m'enseignez: il faut que j'apprenne a parler. Comment appelez-vous la main en Anglois?

ALICE La main? elle est appelee de hand.

KATHARINE De hand. Et les doigts?

ALICE Les doigts? ma foi, j'oublie les doigts; mais je me souviendrai. Les doigts? je pense qu'ils sont appeles de fingres; oui, de fingres.

KATHARINE La main, de hand; les doigts, de fingres. Je pense que je suis le bon ecolier; j'ai gagne deux mots d'Anglois vitement. Comment appelez-vous les ongles?

ALICE Les ongles? nous les appelons de nails.

KATHARINE De nails. Ecoutez; dites-moi, si je parle bien: de hand, de fingres, et de nails.

ALICE C'est bien dit, madame; il est fort bon Anglois.

KATHARINE Dites-moi l'Anglois pour le bras.

Much ado about Will

Version 17

- ALICE De arm, madame.
- KATHARINE Et le coude?
- ALICE De elbow.
- KATHARINE De elbow. Je m'en fais la repetition de tous les mots que vous m'avez appris des a present.
- ALICE Il est trop difficile, madame, comme je pense.
- KATHARINE Excusez-moi, Alice; ecoutez: de hand, de fingres, de nails, de arma, de bilbow.
- ALICE De elbow, madame.
- KATHARINE O Seigneur Dieu, je m'en oublie! de elbow. Comment appelez-vous le col?
- ALICE De neck, madame.
- KATHARINE De nick. Et le menton?
- ALICE De chin.
- KATHARINE De sin. Le col, de nick; de menton, de sin.
- ALICE Oui. Sauf votre honneur, en verite, vous prononcez les mots aussi droit que les natifs d'Angleterre.
- KATHARINE Je ne doute point d'apprendre, par la grace de Dieu, et en peu de temps.
- ALICE N'avez vous pas deja oublie ce que je vous ai enseigne?
- KATHARINE Non, je reciterai a vous promptement: de hand, de fingres, de mails--
- ALICE De nails, madame.
- KATHARINE De nails, de arm, de ilbow.
- ALICE Sauf votre honneur, de elbow.

Much ado about Will

Version 17

KATHARINE Ainsi dis-je; de elbow, de nick, et de sin. Comment appelez-vous le pied et la robe?

ALICE De foot, madame; et de coun.

KATHARINE De foot et de coun! O Seigneur Dieu! ce sont mots de son mauvais, corruptible, gros, et impudique, et non pour les dames d'honneur d'user: je ne voudrais

KATHERINE prononcer ces mots devant les seigneurs de France pour tout le monde. Foh! le foot et le coun! Neanmoins, je reciterai une autre fois ma leçon ensemble: de hand, de fingres, de nails, de arm, de elbow, de nick, de sin, de foot, de coun.

ALICE Excellent, madame!

KATHARINE C'est assez pour une fois: allons-nous a diner.

Exeunt

I was Burbage's Understudy

Woman and Kemp enter conversationally

Woman Burbage! T'as connu Burbage? Mais bien sûr que tu l'as connu; c'était le principal, n'est-ce pas?

Kemp Indeed he was - all the best parts came his way - Hamlet, Macbeth even Othello. I remember Will once cast him as Malvolio in Twelfth Night but Burbage didn't fancy it so I did it instead. You know the bit where Malvolio appears before Olivia wearing —

Woman — des bas jaunes et ses jarretières croisées! Mais oui je m'en souviens! Malvolio, le chambellan superbe et absurde, mord sur l'hameçon tendu par la gouvernante, Maria, qui le fait croire qu'Olivia l'aime à la folie et désire qu'il lui signifie son affection réciproque en se présentant vêtu de bas jaunes et ses jarretières croisées!

Kemp *In synch with Woman ...* Yellow stockings and cross-gartered *They laugh.* Well, as I said, Burbage thought the role beneath him so Malvolio fell to me. But on the opening night my performance was so

Much ado about Will

Version 17

admired that bloody Burbage took it back for himself and I became the clown again. *Sighs* I'll show you if you like!

Woman O iesse plize!

Kemp Well somebody'd better sing a song or something while I go and get the leg-wear...

SONG "When that I was a little tiny boy" From 12th Night

At the end of the song Maria and Olivia enter

OLIVIA

Where is Malvolio?

MARIA

He's coming, madam; but in very strange manner. He is, sure, possessed, madam.

OLIVIA

Why, what's the matter? does he rave?

MARIA

No. madam, he does nothing but smile: your ladyship were best to have some guard about you, if he come; for, sure, the man is tainted in's wits.

OLIVIA

Go call him hither. *Exit MARIA*

I am as mad as he, If sad and merry madness equal be.

Re-enter MARIA, with MALVOLIO

How now, Malvolio!

MALVOLIO

Sweet lady, ho, ho.

OLIVIA

Smilest thou?

I sent for thee upon a sad occasion.

MALVOLIO

Sad, lady! I could be sad: this does make some obstruction in the blood, this cross-gartering; but what of that? if it please the eye of one, it is with me as the very true sonnet is, 'Please one, and please all.'

OLIVIA

Why, how dost thou, man? what is the matter with thee?

MALVOLIO

Not black in my mind, though yellow in my legs. It

Much ado about Will

Version 17

did come to his hands, and commands shall be executed: I think we do know the sweet Roman hand.

OLIVIA

Wilt thou go to bed, Malvolio?

MALVOLIO

To bed! ay, sweet-heart, and I'll come to thee.

OLIVIA

God comfort thee! Why dost thou smile so and kiss thy hand so oft?

MARIA

How do you, Malvolio?

MALVOLIO

At your request! yes; nightingales answer daws.

MARIA

Why appear you with this ridiculous boldness before my lady?

MALVOLIO

'Be not afraid of greatness:' 'twas well writ.

OLIVIA

What meanest thou by that, Malvolio?

MALVOLIO

'Some are born great,'--

OLIVIA

Ha!

MALVOLIO

'Some achieve greatness,'--

OLIVIA

What sayest thou?

MALVOLIO

'And some have greatness thrust upon them.'

OLIVIA

Heaven restore thee!

MALVOLIO

'Remember who commended thy yellow stockings,'--

OLIVIA

Thy yellow stockings!

MALVOLIO

And wished to see thee cross-gartered.'

OLIVIA

Cross-gartered!

MALVOLIO

'Go to thou art made, if thou desirest to be so;'--

OLIVIA

Am I made?

Much ado about Will

Version 17

MALVOLIO

'If not, let me see thee a servant still.'

OLIVIA

Why, this is very midsummer madness.
 Good Maria, let this fellow be looked to.
 Where's my cousin Toby? Let some of my people have a special
 care of him: I would not have him miscarry for the
 half of my dowry.

Exeunt OLIVIA and MARIA

MALVOLIO

O, ho! do you come near me now? no worse man than
 Sir Toby to look to me! This concurs directly with
 the letter: she sends him on purpose, that I may
 appear stubborn to him; for she incites me to that
 in the letter. 'Cast thy humble slough,' says she;
 'be opposite with a kinsman, surly with servants;
 let thy tongue tang with arguments of state; put
 thyself into the trick of singularity;' and
 consequently sets down the manner how; as, a sad
 face, a reverend carriage, a slow tongue, in the
 habit of some sir of note, and so forth. I have
 limed her; but it is Jove's doing, and Jove make me
 thankful! And when she went away now, 'Let this
 fellow be looked to:' fellow! not Malvolio, nor
 after my degree, but fellow. Why, every thing
 adheres together, that no dram of a scruple, no
 scruple of a scruple, no obstacle, no incredulous
 or unsafe circumstance--What can be said? Nothing
 that can be can come between me and the full
 prospect of my hopes. Well, Jove, not I, is the
 doer of this, and he is to be thanked.

MORE SKETCHES, SONGS and MUSIC TO COME.....

FINALE

At the end of the final sketch FULL LIGHTS the company enter and the band strikes up "Brush up your Shakespeare". They sing

Brush up your Shakespeare,
 Start quoting him now.
 Brush up your Shakespeare

