# FALSTAFF RISETH

**By Rachael Carnes**

With consultation by students at the Arts & Academics High School in Springfield, OR

# CHARACTERS

THE LORD CHAMBERLAIN’S MEN: "sharers," who split profits and debts

### Richard Burbage A brooding, lanky High School senior, he’s played most of the lead roles, including Hamlet, Othello and Lear.

### Will Kempe A perpetual sophomore, specializing in comic roles — Dogberry, Bottom and Lancelot Gobbo — Chubby, good dancer, only player who could grow a beard.

### Thomas Friend to Will, never graduated. He works at a local pizza parlor, and can get the troupe a discount.

### George Stage Manager, she provides all technical capacities. (Name is George — But she’s played by a woman.)

### Augustine A recent transfer, High School junior, she directed the rival High School’s Admiral’s Men. Current Club Treasurer.

### Henry (“II”) A freshman, scrawny, Club Secretary and Dramaturg.

### John Drama Club Assistant Stage Manager, a freshman, she chafes at being a protégé. (She’s played by a woman.)

### Kathy A mom who volunteers — a lot.

### Liz Wealthy but plainly dressed, homeschooled, a redhead — she just wants to write plays.

Assorted Puppets (Double-triple-and-quadruple casted.) King Friday, Richard II, John of Gaunt, Henry Bolingbroke, Thomas Mowbray, Hand-puppet Lord Appellants, Exton (Bit part), Hotspur, Henry IV, Prince Henry (Hal), Frederic, Mabel, Ruth, Modern Major General, Sergeant Samuel — and a nameless army of finger puppet cannon fodder.

Puppet Falstaff A basketball.

Please note: Sometimes the writer uses | to show people talking at the same time.

Please approach the whole effort in the spirit of *Louder, Faster, Funnier*.

And for casting, please be as cool and groovy and as inclusive as possible. ☺

# EAST CHEAP HIGH SCHOOL

# 1599

Act One

Scene One — The Company Mourns

At rise, the stage looks vaguely like a High School gym, with a basketball hoop, and a painted gym floor. The space is set with a long rolling table (like in cafeterias) laden with a corpse (not a real one! — Maybe it’s a mannequin?) of HENRY, wearing a black suit and snappy dress shoes, covered in the state flag of wherever the show’s being produced. (Comedy: The face is covered, but the shoes stick out.) Onstage, we also find a large rolling white board with dry erase markers (like where P.E. teachers write drills) and a few large bins, stuffed with balls, scrimmage vests, jump ropes, cones, etc. — Gym stuff. There are some school chairs against the wall and a smallish wooden table. A blown-up poster-sized school photo of HENRY (He’s the dead guy) wearing clothes from when he began his teaching career (in the 1980’s) sits on an easel. This photo should look as dopey as possible, and ideally be a photo of some community celebrity — For example, a school principal or the artistic director of a theater company. Finally, to really set the mood, a banner, that reads “EAST CHEAP HIGH SCHOOL DRAMA CLUB” hangs on the back wall somewhere.

*KATHY enters, carrying grocery store tote bags. She acknowledges DEAD HENRY then sets to work preparing a smorgasbord, with flowers, snacks, juice, etc. The works.*

RICHARD and WILL enter, carrying backpacks and green flyers. They ignore KATHY as she comes and goes.

RICHARD

(*Addressing the audience*.) Welcome, fellow thespians! — (*Sees corpse, ignores it*.)

WILL

(*Sees corpse.*) Weraday the sad occasion! (*To the audience*.) We’re so glad you’ve all come for auditions!

*RICHARD and WILL address the audience:*

RICHARD

Great turn out!

WILL

Nice to see so many new faces!

RICHARD

And don’t worry — There are so many parts in this show!

WILL

At least 14 of you are going to die!

RICHARD

It’s a great show for high school! — Lots of roles — Like *two dozen*!

WILL

Mute army guy — Mute townsperson — Spear guy —   
  
 RICHARD

Big ensemble!

WILL

(*To audience*.) You all have a monologue, right?

RICHARD

I thought they needed two monologues? One comedic and one dramatic —

WILL

Wait — Where are you going? Richard — They’re leaving! Don’t go!

RICHARD

Wait! — As it says on these flyers, we’re casting for *Titus Andronicus*.

WILL

See? That guy who’s holding the severed head? That’s Titus —

RICHARD

I play Titus.

WILL

I thought I could play Titus.

RICHARD

I play all the leads! — You’re the comic sidekick!

WILL

Show of hands — Who wants me to play Titus?

*AUGUSTINE enters, with a backpack and orange flyers.*

Augustine

Hi Will, hi Richard — (*Sees photo of HENRY*.) Oh my god — (*Sees body.*) There he is!

WILL

He’s lying in State — (*Aside — Like Groucho*.) At least ‘til the State finals.

AUGUSTINE

Why are his shoes are poking out? Will — Fix that. (*WILL futzes around with trying to pull the flag up or down, but it’s just too small*.) Oh Henry — (*She cries*.) I’m not crying!

RICHARD

You’re interrupting auditions!

AUGUSTINE

What auditions? This is the memorial for Henry — I made a flyer — See?

RICHARD

We have a flyer, too — That’s why *they’re* here!

AUGUSTINE

Well I made a flyer *and* a Facebook event!

RICHARD

Sometimes I say I’m ‘going’ to something on Facebook *just to be nice*.

WILL

Look at this audience! They’re like the bulls of Pamplona! Such energy!

AUGUSTINE

What’s Pamplona? We’re here for the memorial —

WILL

They’re here to find out who they are! (*Starts doing vocal exercises.*)

*THOMAS enters, carrying a pizza box.*

THOMAS

Hey, guys! Hey — Gus. How — Uh — Me — I brought a pizza! You like pineapple? (*Sees picture of Henry*.) Whoa — (*Then Corpse*.) Dude!

AUGUSTINE

We find him a grave man. (*Cries*.)

WILL

He broke his own ‘Dying Offstage’ rule —

THOMAS

(*To Augustine*.) You look — I — that — Face. (*Digs in paper bag*.) Cheese?

AUGUSTINE

How can you think of cheese at a time like this?

THOMAS

Little Kleenex? (*Hands her small plastic Kleenex packet* *from his pocket*.) My mom —

AUGUSTINE

(*Takes Kleenex*.) Thanks. (*Blows nose*.)

RICHARD  
Enough interruptions!

WILL

Blah blah blah *crying*.

RICHARD

These auditions demand authenticity!   
  
 WILL

Which one of you in the bleachers volunteers to have their arm chopped off?

RICHARD

Show of hands! See — Only I play Titus! If you want the role — You have to *bleed*.

WILL

Are we doing amputations before or after public speaking?

AUGUSTINE

Just stop! There are no auditions today — We’re here for Henry! (*To audience*.) He was a great drama teacher and baron and Lord! (*She cries*.)

THOMAS

To weep is to make less the depth of grief.

AUGUSTINE

Shut up, Thomas! That is such a stupid thing to say!

RICHARD

Before the auditions let’s do warm ups —

WILL

Who knows a good tongue twister?

AUGUSTINE

No vocal warm ups! We’re here to *mourn*. (*Shows her flyer*.)

RICHARD

“Memorial” — No! — I’m playing *Titus*. (*Shows his flyer*.) See?

THOMAS

I — I — help — auditions, but I — your pain — and — Pizza discount! (*Shows flyer*.)

AUGUSTINE

Argh! I am *fine* — *Okay*? Here are your stupid tissues. (*She returns Kleenex packet — THOMAS is crushed*.) Richard and Will, clearly — I can’t let you two do anything!

RICHARD

We made a *flyer*!

WILL

It is green!

AUGUSTINE

I told you to move the auditions to next week!

RICHARD

I can’t conform to your concepts of “time” and “space”!

AUGUSTINE

Will — I asked you to get food donations — Did you do it?

WILL   
I texted my mom to bring cookies and juice *for the auditions*.

*No one has noticed how throughout the scene, KATHY has been bringing in a spread of snacks and setting them up.*

AUGUSTINE

Oh — Hi Will’s mom. (*KATHY waves*.)

AUGUSTINE

(*To audience*.) Those snacks are for mourners only —

KATHY

I baked these cookies and there’s some fresh organic juice —It’s on ice — And I know you need protein so there’s some string cheese and —

AUGUSTINE

Will’s mom, some of us don’t do dairy.

THOMAS

I’m — Hey-Can-I — load your — minivan?

KATHY

Will, I’m heading back to work. Text me when you need a ride home.

WILL

Fine! Mom — Got it. (*Rolls eyes while munching snacks*.)

*THOMAS and KATHY exit.*

RICHARD

(*To a particular audience member*.) You there — I think you’re in my math class? Why don’t we start with *your* dramatic monologue?

AUGUSTINE

(*To same audience member*.) No! Stay right where you are! This is a *memorial*. Be sad!

JOHN and GEORGE enter, with drawings and a set model.

JOHN

Sorry we’re late — (*Ignores photo and corpse*.) George and I were having a design meeting! Look at these drawings! Pretty cool, right?

GEORGE

She’s got some great costume ideas for *Titus*. And here’s a model of the set.   
  
 AUGUSTINE

Can I see those? — (*She takes drawings and 3-D design*.)

JOHN

I thought we could do the show in a modern army base —   
  
 RICHARD

No! That has been done and done and done!

WILL

(*To same audience member*.) We haven’t forgotten your monologue, okay buddy?

JOHN

With fatigues — You know? And camo? — Like everyone’s *equal*.

RICHARD

(*Taking 3-D model*.) What’s with this set? I see Rome — But where is *Titus*?

GEORGE

We’re trying to help you realize the artistic vision —

RICHARD

But would it kill you to put a little Titus in the model — Like — Right here?   
  
 AUGUSTINE

This is not the time for auditions or a design meeting! (*To audience*.) I hope you all prepared a sad and poignant ballad! John, did you set up the mic for all their solos?

JOHN

What’s a “mic”?

GEORGE

I was told auditions *and* the memorial were today. (*Shows flyers*.) I hate being misled.

ALL EXCEPT GEORGE

(*Improvise reasons why their point of view is the right one*.)

GEORGE

Okay! Stop — Let me just ask a few questions.

AUGUSTINE

It’s all meaningless now — (*Points to corpse*.) We don’t have a leader! (*Cries*.)

THOMAS

(*From offstage*, *To AUGUSTINE*.) All that lives must die —

AUGUSTINE

(*To THOMAS*.) That is so inappropriate!

RICHARD

Some of us didn’t even like Henry!

AUGUSTINE

How can you say that?! After —

GEORGE

(*To the audience*.) Okay — How many of you are here for Titus Andronicus auditions? Show of hands. Uh-huh. And how many of you are here to say goodbye to Henry?

AUGUSTINE

(*To the audience*.) As treasurer, it’s my responsibility to create a prosperous Drama Club culture! (*She cries again*.)

RICHARD

I want you to ask yourselves — If you’re ready to experience a better — more authentic — more fulfilling life?

GEORGE

Did you all forget we have a show tonight?

ALL BUT GEORGE

We do?

GEORGE

You said I should make flyers —

JOHN

(*Showing yellow flyer*.) George asked me to draw them. That’s Henry. See?

AUGUSTINE

I made a flyer with our Henry —

JOHN

No — This flyer is Henry the Fourth. See? Trimmed doublet over long sleeves — red towel thing on his head — Mustache — Scepter? We even sprang for color copies!

AUGUSTINE

We can’t afford color copies!

GEORGE

We agreed at our last meeting to do *Henry the Fourth*?

WILL

We did?

AUGUSTINE

That was *not* in the minutes —

GEORGE

We made flyers — And a Facebook event and we tweeted it. We even took out an ad in the school newsletter! Did you hear the announcement on the intercom?

WILL

When did marketing get so complicated?

AUGUSTINE

I need those minutes!

GEORGE

The show is supposed to start in *twenty minutes*.

AUGUSTINE

Am I naked? Is this a dream? Where is the Club Secretary? He’s late!

GEORGE

I raised the red history flag outside the school this morning! That’s why they’re here!

WILL

Red for *blood*. Each play-house advanceth his flagge in the aire, whither quickly at the waving thereof are summoned —

GEORGE

Yeah — Whatever. How many people here thought they were going to see a show? Show of hands. (*Counts*.) See! Like, what is that, eight, nine people?

RICHARD

Good news — We’re looking at a “compressed rehearsal schedule” —

WILL

We’ll skip your monologues and go right to chopping off Richard’s arm! Hold still!

JOHN

But I don’t have costumes yet — just sketches!

AUGUSTINE

We can’t pull a show together in twenty minutes —

RICHARD

I’m playing Titus Andronicus! I’m the *star* of this violent and bloody tragedy!

GEORGE

So — what color flag *do you want*? Red for history or black for tragedy?

RICHARD

Go put the black flag up!

GEORGE

But they already came here because I put the red flag up!

WILL

Do you have a flag that just says “Welcome Spring”?

AUGUSTINE

You should put up an orange flag for this memorial! Orange was Henry’s favorite color!

*AUGUSTINE cries. THOMAS re-enters.*

THOMAS

I just ran into the gym teacher — He said Mister Henry died from food poisoning!

RICHARD

He was *poisoned*?

THOMAS

Macaroni salad. (*To AUGUSTINE*.) Are — okay?

GEORGE

Who brings macaroni salad to Teacher Appreciation Week?

WILL

Mayonnaise — The silent killer.

AUGUSTINE and RICHARD

I just thought there’d be more people here —

WILL

(*Looking at the audience.)* Well, there’s all of *them*. But they’re here for Morris dancing. I made a flyer. See? (*Shows pink flyer*.) That’s me — I have ribbons tied to my knees!

AUGUSTINE

I mean other teachers — Admin — The principal? The counselors? (*She cries*.)

THOMAS  
Counselors should — here —help — grief!

AUGUSTINE

Shut up, Thomas!

WILL

(*To audience*.) Show of hands — How many of you are here to learn English folk dance?

JOHN

It’s a dog-eat-dog world — and I think I speak for the entire Freshman Drama Club community when I say that we’re only here to get good parts in the next show —

RICHARD

Well you can’t play Titus!

WILL

Because I’m going to! I’ll dance the part of Titus all the way to regionals!

RICHARD

Titus Andronicus does not dance!

WILL  
Care to make a bet?

GEORGE

Friends, I’m clearly the most sage-like member of this group because look at all my keys. (*Shows keys to entire building*.) Allow me to shed some light. You want to hold auditions — You want a funeral — And all of them — Came here for a show that isn’t even written yet. Now I’m going to the lighting booth to read a magazine I enjoy about sound design and when I return, I expect this to be sorted.

*GEORGE exits to back of house. HENRY II enters.*

HENRY II

Black flag — Red flag! Who cares? Theater is *dying*. Because it’s *boring*! We should disrupt! Destroy! Shock and overturn! — Titus Andronicus is *perfect*!

JOHN

I think this *Titus* should try to encourage a sense of belonging?

RICHARD

What? No! No belonging — Graphic violence! Titus returns from war to find 20 of his sons — Dead. No jokes, Will!

WILL

I tweaked the Titus script you gave me a little bit. Here — (*Still dancing — He makes his hands flap like they’re puppets talking*.) Demetrius — This is Demetrius — “Villain, what hast thou done?” Now Aaron — “That which thou canst not undo.” You be Chiron!

RICHARD

I am not going to be puppet Chiron — I’m a *lead actor*.

WILL

This scene from Titus is for three people and I only have two hands!

RICHARD

Fine! (*Lifts his hand to be a puppet*.) Chiron: “Thou hast undone our mother.”

WILL

(*His “puppet” Aaron talking*.) “Villain, I have done thy mother!”

RICHARD

You’re always ruining the mood, Will! This is a *tragedy*.

WILL

But I’ve written the first ‘Your mum’ joke in recorded history!

AUGUSTINE

Stop it you two! I don’t like the Feng Shui of this set-up. Help me move the body —

WILL

Your mum is so stupid — she stared at a carton of juice because it said "Concentrate."

THOMAS

(*To AUGUSTINE*.) By — my hope — you —find-me — attractive?

WILL

Your mum is so stupid, she put lipstick on her forehead to make up her mind.

RICHARD

No ‘your mum’ jokes in Titus! No jokes in tragedies anywhere — And no dancing!

HENRY II

Rules are meant to be broken! (*Pretend*-*Killing JOHN*.) “Die, frantic wretch, for this accursed deed!” — Kills Titus! Ha! You can’t handle my radical freedom!

JOHN

(*Getting swept up in the play-fighting*.) “Can the son's eye behold his father bleed?”

RICHARD

“There's meed for meed, death for a deadly deed!” — See how I did that? That’s *acting*.

WILL

I still think I’d bring something extra to Titus.

RICHARD

Extra quarter pounder with —

AUGUSTINE

Will you stop it? We’re here for Henry’s memorial — Not auditions!

RICHARD

We’re not auditioning anymore —

WILL

This is rehearsal!

HENRY II

(*To Will*.) Why did you ask me to make these flyers then? (*Shows purple flyers*.)

WILL

Oh man — I forgot.

HENRY II

How can you forget our band? We’re auditioning for a new bass player —

AUGUSTINE

Can you play something sad — For Henry? He loved Celine Dion.

GEORGE

(*Returning*.) Because none of you can communicate we’ve got people here for a memorial, for dance lessons and two different auditions. And I call places for an unwritten, uncast and unrehearsed show — in 30 minutes.

RICHARD

Why is the house open if we have a show tonight? I need to prepare my vocal instrument.

AUGUSTINE

Can you play that song from “Titanic”?

WILL

Do you really think Rose couldn’t have found just a little room on that door for Jack?

GEORGE

They’re here for Henry the Fourth!

RICHARD

We’re doing Titus! — My brother Cuthbert wrote it. He goes to *Dartmouth.*

AUGUSTINE

We are *not* doing a play by your brother who goes to Dartmouth!

HENRY II

(*Leaping around, pretend killing.*) “Kills SATURNINUS! — A great tumult!”

JOHN

Oh! What if when we get to that part, we have them break the fourth wall and go up through the audience — like this? (*He goes into audience, a great tumult.)*

HENRY II

Usually I’m a rebel — I don’t like orders — But great idea!“Then Lucias and Marcus — go up into the balcony!” Come on! Let’s go! (*HENRY and JOHN exit back of house.)*

AUGUSTINE

John! Henry! Get back here — They’re not ready for ontological! I don’t like this, either! Thomas — Help me move the body another inch.

THOMAS

My outward-directed desire to please puts me at risk for losing my own identity.

AUGUSTINE

It has to be *perfect*.

THOMAS

Worst — moving — couch-backwards — stairs —

WILL

Your mum is so stupid —

AUGUSTINE

A few more inches — There.

THOMAS | RICHARD

Augustine — dissociating? | Dartmouth is an excellent school! And my brother —

AUGUSTINE

See? I’ve positioned him under the best light —

WILL

The sun?

AUGUSTINE

What do we do now? Shouldn’t one of us say something?

GEORGE

I’m still gathering information — I need to analyze.

THOMAS

(*Raising cup of apple juice*.) A toast! To Henry! Friend — Team-builder!

WILL

What “Team”?

RICHARD

Didn’t you graduate, like, four years ago?

THOMAS

I brought a pizza.

AUGUSTINE

(*To audience*.) This is called the Magic of Theater. It’s like a conversation —

WILL

In other words — Wasting time.

GEORGE

Hey John — Henry — while you’re up there, will you hit the little button?

JOHN

(*From the lighting booth*.) I don’t see any buttons —

HENRY II

(*Also from the lighting booth*) Just chickens. Why are there chickens here?

GEORGE

My chickens are off limits! (*He runs up the back of the house*.)

WILL

Mm, chicken.

AUGUSTINE

I’ve never had to prepare a memorial —

RICHARD

It’s like auditions —

WILL

But with even more judgment.

AUGUSTINE

Judgment? Of what?

JOHN

(*Yelling from the lighting booth*.) I don’t see any buttons!

WILL

The food — The flowers — The overall sentiment.

AUGUSTINE

I just thought — You really think they’ll —

THOMAS

I’ll never judge you, Gus. Pepper flakes?

HENRY II

(*Yelling.*) Ow! These chickens are mean!

RICHARD

No memorial! We’re doing Titus Andronicus — (*To audience*.) Now you — you and you — Let’s get rolling. I’m Titus! I just returned from Goth — That’s France — And I need henchmen. Come on up here! Yes — And Gus — You be the Queen of the Goths —   
  
 AUGUSTINE

I will not be the Queen of anything, Richard! This is a time for reflection! (Cries.)

*Sound effect of great chicken tumult in the lighting booth.*

GEORGE

(*Returning to stage from back of house with a hen under her arm*.) Yeah — It’s 1599 — All I can offer you in terms of lighting is sunlight — And darkness.

RICHARD

What about our cannon?

GEORGE

We do have a cannon! And this chicken.

AUGUSTINE

We came together here to mourn but I don’t feel better — I feel *sadder*. (*Cries*.)

THOMAS

Everyone can master a grief but he that has it.

AUGUSTINE

How is it you always know the exact wrong thing to say?

GEORGE

I’m not going to fire the cannon! (*Hands hen to Will*.) Here, hold her for a sec. (*Rummages through the P.E. stuff. — Yells)* John! Henry! Bring the chicken Pack&Play!

RICHARD

If we can’t have the cannon — Then the fireworks —

WILL

I *love* the fireworks!

GEORGE

She’s broody. (*To audience*.) She’s been in the nesting box longer than normal.

AUGUSTINE

Why would they care? They’re here for Henry’s memorial!

GEORGE

They’re also here for the Poultry Club — I’m the president. See? (*Shows white flyer*.)

WILL

Who’s a good chicken? You’re a good chicken!

GEORGE

The fireworks are too smelly — They’ll get us in trouble.

AUGUSTINE

Fireworks will get us in trouble, but you keep chickens in the lighting booth?

GEORGE

I have all the keys!

JOHN

(*Walking back to the stage*.) I can’t find her Pack&Play, George — Sorry!

HENRY II

(*Following behind JOHN*.)That hen doesn’t want confinement!She wants to be free!

GEORGE

(*To the audience*.) See — That’s what a lot of first timers believe — but you have to stay vigilant to guard against predation. (*Takes hen back from WILL.)* George, John — Go backstage — Look for the Pack&Play, and if you can’t find it, there’s a roll of chicken wire leftover from last year’s *Night of the Iguana* set. (*They start to exit*.) The rest of you — For a show you haven’t even chosen yet — That’s twenty minutes ‘til places.

RICHARD

We did choose — Titus!

AUGUSTINE

No show! We are in *mourning*.

JOHN

(*Stops exiting*.) It’s just —

GEORGE

Yes, John, what is it?

JOHN

It’s just — I’m assistant stage manager and you said — sometimes I could call places?

GEORGE

I did say that — You’re right. Okay, kid. We open a show that’s not written or casted or rehearsed in (*Looks at watch*) 19 minutes. So — You call places.

JOHN

19 —

WILL

What kind of pizza is it?

THOMAS

Half pepperoni, half Canadian bacon.

WILL

The Canadians are masters of bacon.

JOHN

19 minutes —

Augustine

Will you shut up? Let’s sing a song for Henry! Here are the lyrics — (*She distributes*.)

WILL

I’m just eating my feelings.

AUGUSTINE

“My Heart Will Go On” by Celine Dion —

JOHN

19 MINUTES ‘TIL PLACES!

HENRY II

These stupid rules! When I have a theater company we’re not going to —

JOHN

When I call places you’re all supposed to say “Thank you, places.” It’s a *thing* —

AUGUSTINE

I mean, for the song — Couldn’t we have lightening or fire? Or —

GEORGE

You want the fire marshal breathing down my neck?

JOHN

George — Isn’t it a thing?

RICHARD

If anyone’s carrying lights on and off it’s *me* as *Titus*.

GEORGE

Authority is earned, John. It took me four years to get all these keys.

*JOHN and HENRY II exit. Throughout the following, cast members take turns holding the hen.*

AUGUSTINE

I’m glad that at least one of us can provide real leadership here.

GEORGE

Thank you.

AUGUSTINE

I meant me!

WILL

They had lights onstage at State Regionals last year — Admiral High School brought a — What’s that thing called?

THOMAS  
I have a response but I’m afraid to offer it —

AUGUSTINE

It’s a lamp with a transparent case protecting the flame — with a handle?

GEORGE

A lantern?

AUGUSTINE

We’re fundraising for a lantern right now — I organized a car wash!

WILL

Actually — My mom did. It was my mom.

RICHARD

How can the East Cheap High School Drama Club not even have one lantern?

THOMAS

Everything looks wonderful already, Gus —

AUGUSTINE

But it can look *better*!

WILL

Where’s the lantern from “Midsummer’s”?

GEORGE

We rented it.

WILL

We do our shows by the light of the traveling lamp —

AUGUSTINE

He means the sun — Just say the sun! (*At GEORGE*.) Do you have any gaffers tape?

GEORGE

(*Unveils rainbow of tape in her tool belt*.) What color?

AUGUSTINE, WILL and GEORGE mark out tape corners where the rolling table, with HENRY’s body, should go.

AUGUSTINE

(*To audience*.) Gaffers tapes is a heavy cotton cloth tape, with strong adhesive —

WILL

Oh God — Thought executing!

AUGUSTINE

(*To audience*.) What we’re doing is called ‘spiking’ – we pin the corners of objects on the floor here, see, so we can find where we need in the dark. It’s a *thing*.

GEORGE

But we can only see the tape when the moon is full.

RICHARD

I have too much talent — Too much ambition!

AUGUSTINE

You’re too good to tape?

RICHARD

I can’t tape — I’m *Titus*.

WILL

Are we planning a *nocturnal* memorial service?

GEORGE

You’re not Titus because they came for *Henry the Fourth* — that starts in — 17 minutes!

JOHN

(*From offstage*, *yelling*.) 17 minutes places!

ALL BUT RICHARD  
Thank —

RICHARD

Titus! — Written by my brother Cuthbert-who’s-at-Dartmouth —

JOHN

(*From offstage*) You’re supposed to say “Thank you, places!”

WILL

Dartmouth — No one cares!

RICHARD

(*At a particular audience member*.) I have to be true to my soul!

AUGUSTINE

One more piece of tape, here —

RICHARD

Henry was in charge of all the court entertainments —

WILL

Really — *I’m* the funny one.

RICHARD

And he entrusted *me* with that charactery!

AUGUSTINE

(*To the audience*.) Ignore him — Let’s sing!

RICHARD

I claim the power and authority over this Drama Club!

WILL

(*To the audience*.) With Morris dancing — It’s all in the wrist. Do you need jingle bells?

GEORGE

If we could use our collective intelligence to address this situation — Show’s in 15.

JOHN

15 minutes ‘til places! (*Enters with folded Pack&Play, HENRY II following, knitting*.) You guys! You’re supposed to say —

HENRY II

“That fear — This fellowship — To die with us!” — I’m running lines and knitting chainmail. Kathy taught me —   
  
 AUGUSTINE

Henry II — You’re supposed to be recording meeting minutes!

RICHARD

And doing dramaturgy!

AUGUSTINE

Adapting a story to actable form — *That’s your job*!

RICHARD

Of course, I can act anything —

AUGUSTINE

(*To HENRY II*) You’re supposed to give us foundation — And structure!

WILL

Clearly — We need help in those areas.

HENRY II

Knitting helps me manipulate the narrative to reflect the current Zeitgeist!

GEORGE

Some of you are here for Henry — Some for auditions — Some for this chicken club. Regarding that — I had hoped to teach you something about dusting your hen’s vent —

WILL

Chicken vent — That’s like a *butt.*

GEORGE

There’s a *reason* that I have more keys than anyone. They let me drive the Activity van.

RICHARD

You’re a planner, George — Too contemplative!

GEORGE

John — Henry — Help me set up the Pack&Play for this broody hen.

RICHARD

I’m Titus! If anyone’s driving the Activity Van — It’s me!

HENRY II

You sad-faced men — like a flight of fowl —

AUGUSTINE

Henry Two — Are you getting any of this in the minutes?

HENRY II

What are “minutes”?

AUGUSTINE

That’s why we didn’t know there was a show today! You didn’t write it down!

HENRY II

You know I don’t have to be here — I can *leave* anytime I *want*. Why does this stupid club need a secretary, anyway? (*Gets notebook out of backpack*.)

AUGUSTINE

Henry II — We have norms and agreements about our behavior.

WILL

(*To the audience*.) That she wrote herself and made us sign!

AUGUSTINE

Henry II — You have to track genre, ideology, the role of gender representation!

WILL

Morris dancing is inherently collaborative. I want your input! Like — Should we jump on five or seven — Let me show you. (*He offers two examples*.)

GEORGE

One of our norms — I think — is to do a show when we say we’re going to.

HENRY II

(*Writing*.) Bitterness and rivalry…

AUGUSTINE

(*At WILL*.) How will the next generation of theater kids ever look up to you?

WILL

(*Eating.*) I’m really not certain they should.

RICHARD

You’ve been fat *forever.*

WILL

Your mum is so fat — She doesn’t need the internet. She’s already worldwide.

AUGUSTINE

(*To the audience*.) It’s a Drama Club requirement that you all invite your friends to this memorial — Text them right now. Do it — Get out your phones. Let me see you —

THOMAS

Gus, I don’t think Henry’s name is familiar in their mouths.

AUGUSTINE

You disappoint. (*She cries*.)

THOMAS

What she means to say is Henry was so special — The kind of teacher who cared, you know? And now —

HENRY II

(*Peeking at dead Henry*.) He’s just a gloomy shade of *death*!

JOHN

Pack&Play’s all ready.

GEORGE   
Nice job — That earns a key. Here — Upstairs science wing — Girl’s bathroom.

JOHN

Thanks! What is “science”?

WILL

So, is *this* the memorial? Roll Henry around and insult him? Put a chicken in a playpen?

RICHARD

Let’s get that first Titus scene up here! (*Points at audience member*.) You!

THOMAS

Is this a good time to mention that the principal just gave me Mister Carey’s last will and testament? (*He shows them the paper*.)

AUGUSTINE

How long have you — And why did he? — I’m the treasurer!

RICHARD

(*To GEORGE*.) Mister Carey liked to be called *Henry*. Will, will you stop eating pizza?

WILL

Not from the stars do I my judgement pluck.

AUGUSTINE

We can’t read the will. Liz isn’t here!  
  
 WILL

Did she text you?

GEORGE

14 ‘til — You go, kid.

JOHN

(*Yelling*.) 14 ‘til places!

HENRY II

(*Writing*.) Notes late arrival.

WILL

“Renowned Titus! Flourishing in arms!”

RICHARD

Yes — You be Bassianus!

GEORGE  
Who has the script? Should I start the pre-show music?

AUGUSTINE

What show are we doing?!

RICHARD

Titus — “Villain — What hast thou done?” — (*To JOHN*) Go get a lantern!

GEORGE

But the flyers all say this is *Henry the Fourth* — See? (*Shows poultry club flyer*.)

AUGUSTINE

And we can’t read the will, we haven’t said our goodbyes yet! Who brought tapers?

WILL

An herbivorous mammal?

AUGUSTINE

The candles!

JOHN

I did — Here, one for everyone.

GEORGE

Nope!

AUGUSTINE

What?

GEORGE

Not in my theater!

WILL

It’s just a candle, George.

GEORGE

Safety first! I mean, cannons, of course — totally necessary for the start of every show — But candles? Forget it! What if something happens?

AUGUSTINE

Don’t we have sprinklers?

WILL

I’ve heard Admiral High School has ‘em —   
  
 GEORGE

We have this big pot of water — I keep it downstage left — So you all know.

AUGUSTINE

If Henry were here, he’d ask for the safety training. (*Cries*.)

THOMAS

You’re safe with me —

GEORGE

Fires — Cuts — Abrasions — Falls — Dehydration. There’s this big pot of water, okay?

JOHN

What’s “dehydration”?

HENRY II

I’m too punk rock for safety! (*Inhales on his inhaler*.)

RICHARD

You can’t be punk rock! — You’re the dramaturg! You have to be able to make us feel comfortable while watching a theatrical performance —

GEORGE

That ship has sailed.

AUGUSTINE

Fine! If we don’t have candles — We’ll just use our fingers! — (*She points her index finger and begins humming, then singing, ‘This Little Light of Mine’ as scene continues.*)

WILL

I wonder if Liz’s bus was late?

RICHARD

She doesn’t even go here!

AUGUSTINE

But she’s a part of this club — (*Singing*) I’m gonna let it shine!

GEORGE

She’s written the last four plays we produced.

HENRY II

She couldn’t use her own name though — Could she? She had to use *stage names*.

JOHN

*Nom de plumes.*

AUGUSTINE

(*Singing, she “puts out” her finger*) Put it out with passive aggression? (*her finger bounces back up*.) No! I’m gonna let it shine!

WILL

“Romeo and Juliet” — by Burtron Wamble.

AUGUSTINE

(*Singing, she “puts out” her finger*) Put it out with Mean Girl bullying on social media? (*her finger bounces back up*.) No! I’m gonna let it shine!

WILL

“A Midsummer Night’s Dream” — by Gary Whisker. But I fed her a great dirty joke in that one! (*Using his hands as puppets*.) Pyramus — O kiss me through the *hole* of this vile wall! Thisbe — I kiss the wall's *hole*, not your lips at all! Get it?

AUGUSTINE

(*Singing, she “puts out” her finger*) The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes! (*Her finger bounces back up*.) No! I’m gonna let it shine! Let it shine! Let it —

WILL

(*To audience*.) Show of hands — Who loves a play within a play?

RICHARD

We don’t owe Liz *anything*!

AUGUSTINE

(*At the audience*.) You should know that Liz has given us exclusive rights to all her creative work — All her plays, poems, sonnets —

RICHARD

Not as good as my brother’s. He’s at Dartmouth!

AUGUSTINE

Because of her play “Macbeth” —

ALL

Stop! (*Everyone does weird superstitious theater people behavior — It’s a thing*.)

WILL

(*Whispering*.) Say the “The Scottish Play”!

GEORGE  
We’re doing *Henry the Fourth*! (*Shows flyer*.)

AUGUSTINE

Thanks to “The Scottish Play” last year, were able to recoup some of the losses from Richard’s one-man “Starlight Express” fiasco —

RICHARD

I just didn’t have the budget to fully realize my vision.

GEORGE

Hydraulic lifts?

WILL

Singing on roller skates —   
  
 THOMAS

I love you brother, but — The whole Brechtian spin was an odd choice.

AUGUSTINE

I want to agnize that not only has Liz —

WILL

(*Skating around the stage*.) I am a train! I am a steam train!

GEORGE

12 minutes ‘til places, folks.

WILL

(*In an agitprop manner.*) “You are in a theater and this is a show about skating trains!”

RICHARD

(*At WILL*) Cry you mercy, Will Kempe? You battened cubiculo!

AUGUSTINE

(*Opening her laptop*.) According to this Excel spreadsheet —   
  
 WILL  
And your show was a one-act! There was *no escape*!

RICHARD

That’s how you build dramatic tension!

WILL

By the end, the poor audience was like these guys — Living carcasses!

RICHARD

I got really good feedback!  
  
 WILL

The poor embowell’d audience was groaning for burial! And we’re gonna lose half these new members to the Dungeons and Dragons Club next door!   
  
 JOHN

There’s Dungeons and Dragons?

WILL

Yeah — They have a flyer — (*Shows blue flyer*.) See? Oh — Look — It says —

GEORGE

(*To audience*.) Show of hands — How many are here for a delightful role-playing game?

AUGUSTINE

This isn’t a problem!

GEORGE

Henry the Fourth — Band auditions — Morris Dancing — Poultry Club — Titus Andronicus — And D&D. And we don’t have a show.

AUGUSTINE

People say I’m bossy — BUT I’M NOT BOSSY!

WILL

More like — Authoritarian.

AUGUSTINE

Power isn’t everything! It’s the only thing! (*She cries*.) I need emotional support!

THOMAS

I’m here for you —

AUGUSTINE

That’s so gross, Thomas! Ew! — I’m going to just sit in the Pack&Play with the chicken!

Scene Two — Liz Arrives

LIZ enters, KATHY following.

LIZ

Sorry I’m late. I missed my bus —

AUGUSTINE

(*From the Pack&Play*.) The memorial already started! (*Cries*.) Where’ve you been?

LIZ  
Thanks for driving me, Kathy.

KATHY

Sure — Glad you texted me. You kids need anything while I’m here?

RICHARD

I am kind of thirsty.

KATHY

Shall I pour you some juice?

WILL

God, mom! That’s *so embarrassing*. Hey Liz — Pizza?

LIZ

I’m a vegetarian.

WILL

This one has pepperoni *and* mushrooms. You can go now, mom!

KATHY

It’s just —   
  
 WILL

Okay! Thanks! Bye! (*KATHY begins exiting*.)

THOMAS

You’re a saint, Kathy! (*She exits. To WILL*.) I feel like I’m gonna spend a lifetime looking for someone like her — You know what I mean? Is that a thing?

GEORGE

I think that’s a thing — A complex, son.

THOMAS

I know your calling me “son” comes from a place of love but I *am* older than you.

AUGUSTINE

Liz is here — Let’s read the will!

GEORGE

Let’s rehearse! We have seven minutes to run lights and sound —

WILL

What lights? The sun?

GEORGE

Well — What show are we doing? Can I at least know *that*?

RICHARD

Time for physical warm ups and rolling! Vengeance in my heart! Death in my hand!

HENRY II

Rolling — Meeting minutes and as dramaturg — the psychological underpinnings of characters! (*He drops to roll around*.) Blood and revenge are hammering in my head!

AUGUSTINE

No Titus! We’re doing Henry the Fourth — Liz — Will you write it?

LIZ

Of course — I write everything.   
  
 AUGUSTINE

But first — Let’s see what Henry left us?

GEORGE

So — Quick read of the will then places — for an unrehearsed show yet to be written —

JOHN

(*Full tantrum*.) I call places — You said I call places!

GEORGE

Fine! You’re like a wounded child! (*Unfurling the scroll*.) Anon, anon —

RICHARD

(*To an audience member, fake crying*.) My unreclaimed heart —

WILL

Will you quit flirting? She’s like, 13 years old.

GEORGE

I’ll read the will now — But be warned — It can stir up feelings.

THOMAS

I am here for your feelings, Gus! I’m ready to listen!

AUGUSTINE

(*To GEORGE*) Up-staring and tall! Like you mean it.

GEORGE

You’re actually micromanaging the way I read this? (*Standing straight up*.) I Henry —

AUGUSTINE

I made the flyer! *See*? This is *my* memorial for Henry!

RICHARD

Well I’m playing Titus —   
  
 HENRY II  
Sometimes I feel like my fear of powerlessness will lead me to the dark side.

WILL

Okay, save that for when we’re devising.

GEORGE

“I Henry” —  
  
 HENRY II

(*To audience*.) They mean me!

WILL

(*To the audience — pointing towards HENRY II without HENRY II seeing*.) He’s our “misfit” — Our “iconoclast” —

AUGUSTINE

Wait! Maybe we should first have a moment for Henry the first?

GEORGE

Oh my god, Gus. We all miss him —   
  
 THOMAS

And he’s *not* Henry the first.   
  
 GEORGE

Here we go — You know we have a show five minutes. There’s the *paying audience*. John! Go to the box office and get the —   
  
 JOHN

Get the box?

GEORGE

Yes — The box in the office where we keep the money —

AUGUSTINE

(*To audience*.) It’s called the box office.

GEORGE

(*To audience*.) We’re going to give you all refunds —

AUGUSTINE

No — We’re not! I am the treasurer! John — You stay right where you are!

THOMAS

There have been four Henrys that have led this drama program.

RICHARD

I feel like this moment needs a ritual — Is that the right word? I brought my guitar!

AUGUSTINE

I’ve only known this Henry — And that Henry (*Cries*.)   
  
 THOMAS

Tears are good, just let it all flow.

GEORGE

Before these Henrys there was the Language Arts teacher Henry and before him — Mrs. Henry — She taught Home Ec —

JOHN  
What is “Home Ec”?

THOMAS

And before Mrs. Henry, there was the Band Teacher Mr. Henry — he liked musicals.

LIZ

We’re all here for *our* Henry. He was a *visionary*!

RICHARD

He’s our Henry — Not your Henry. You don’t even go here!  
  
 THOMAS

None of the Henrys would have been a Henry without the *first* Henry.

LIZ

Henry blazed the trail — got the funding — went to battle!

RICHARD

My brother Cuthbert’s at Dartmouth! It’s a *hard school*.

HENRY II

How does this advance theater? You’re all *babies*! (*Writing*) Continued infighting —

JOHN

I’m afraid that I’ll lose myself — blend in — for the sake of superficial relationships —

HENRY II

As dramaturg — Will I get a percentage of royalties?

AUGUSTINE

None of us get paid!

WILL

Whether we read the will or do a show or — I’m carbo-loading! (*Eats more pizza*.)   
  
 GEORGE

Back up, Thomas — That would make Henry — Dead Henry — Henry the Fourth?

THOMAS

Right — and this Henry — Henry II —

HENRY II

Don’t you see how you’re all stuck in your dumb lines of succession? Break free!

THOMAS

Some say I’m schooled and never learn — but I know this. He’s Henry the Fifth.  
  
 LIZ

Those goddamn French!

WILL

(*To the audience*.) You should understand, our meetings are a death march.

THOMAS

(*To the audience*.) I want to swim in the waters of life!

LIZ

(*To the audience*.) Henry the Fifth follows the long war with the French.

THOMAS

My greatest desire is emotional intimacy.

AUGUSTINE

Gross! Aren’t you like — 30?

WILL

We’re here for Morris dancing!

RICHARD AND HENRY II

For Titus!

LIZ  
(*Writing script long hand with a quill*.) I need more time to write *Henry the Fourth*!

GEORGE

Five minutes —   
  
 JOHN

FIVE MINUTES PLACES!

HENRY II

I didn’t care about Henry — But I’m the “Secretary” so I have stuff down my own radical freedom and record everything in the stupid minutes! (*Writing*) “We are gathered to mourn Henry the Fourth.”

WILL

I’ll do a festive jig — to make this more interesting for the new members!

THOMAS

They’re alike bewitched by you, Will — You bring so much to this Drama Club aery!

WILL

(*Dancing*.) Their eyes — White upturned!   
  
 LIZ

Histories are so boring — I could spice it up? Maybe a potion? Mistaken identity?

WILL

(*To audience*.) Do you like that? The way I wield my handkerchiefs?

LIZ

Twins! Let’s have twins! Separated by class and circumstance! *Hilarious*!

RICHARD

How ‘bout a song by Wings? I know the chords to — (*Picks up guitar*.)

WILL

(*Dancing.*) How can you love Wings? They’re the worst!   
  
 RICHARD

Do any of you want me to play “Live and Let Die” on my guitar?   
  
 ALL

No!

THOMAS

The first Henry taught English —   
  
 HENRY II

Sure — the language of *oppression*! (*Writing*) “English” —

LIZ

That’s the chosen language!

AUGUSTINE

After the meeting — we need to talk about your xenophobia —

GEORGE

The unwritten, uncast, unrehearsed show begins in —

LIZ  
What? It’s true! The French are *awful*.   
  
 AUGUSTINE

(*To THOMAS*.) Which Henry?

THOMAS

Henry One — he got around the school board censors.

LIZ

Like my sister Mary?

AUGUSTINE

Mary’s on the school board? How come *I’m* not on the school board?

LIZ  
She’s a student representative —

AUGUSTINE

What does she advise them on? I should be an advisor! I can make Excel spreadsheets!

GEORGE

I thought about assisting with the school board —

LIZ

Mary oversees all the censorship — The usual standards and practice —

AUGUSTINE  
Cuts to the budget are one thing, but censorship — That’s utter chaos!

GEORGE

It’s just me and my chickens —

LIZ

Aye, we should be alarum’d — When you lead a crowd through independent thought—

AUGUSTINE

Can’t you just talk to Mary and tell her —   
  
 RICHARD

Tell her we’re doing Titus!

HENRY II

I have so much to do! I research files of materials! History or social context! I write the *program notes*! (Flipping out) I lead the post-show discussions!

ALL

Post-show discussions — Yuck!

HENRY II

I tell my dramaturgical sorrows to the stones!

RICHARD

Raise the black flag! Titus is starting! I am Titus!

LIZ

My sister Mary and I have never been close. She tried to kill me!

RICHARD

I’d adventure my discretion to talk to her myself!

WILL

You and your ambition!

THOMAS

Henry One got around the school board by using the Theater of the Absurd.

RICHARD

I’m a *Pilgrim* — A *seeker*! I’ll have Cuthbert call Mary — He goes to *Dartmouth*.

Henry II

Structure, rhythm, flow — individual word choices! (*Writing*) The show is doomed!

AUGUSTINE

Henry II, the Secretary is supposed to take notes *on* the meeting — Read the rules!

HENRY II

I’m leaving! (*Throws clipboard, etc*.) Take your own notes, if it’s so easy! (*Exits.*)

AUGUSTINE

Liz — I need you to write the script for *Henry the Fourth* and keep meeting minutes.

LIZ

*My* writing is totally realistic —   
  
 WILL

Except when it traffics in thunder-stones and tinkers!

LIZ

You’re not a writer — You just make fart jokes!   
  
 WILL

You think audiences wanna sit through History?

GEORGE

I raised the red flag this morning! They prefer comedy — But it’s 1599 — No Netflix.

LIZ

*Henry the Fourth* was her idea — My work is vital, vibrant — Compelling!

WILL

Without my pithy comedic interjections — your plays would be limp churros.

LIZ

“Limp churros”? That’s why *you’re* not the playwright — I am!

RICHARD

Our playwright’s my brother Cuthbert — And we’re doing his *Titus Andronicus*!

WILL

Limp churros actually sound tasty —

GEORGE

Well, look! Some of the audience is leaving!

AUGUSTINE

Um — Excuse me — This meeting is NOT ADJOURNED.

WILL

Tell the Dungeon Master I’ll be there later — Oh — Never mind — She’s here. (*Bothering singled-out audience member*.) Hey! My character’s ‘Snails’ — Friend to Ridley Freeborn — Fun — Okay — Hey — I got a new minifig, see? Cool!

AUGUSTINE

Silence! Stillness! Everyone! You, too, chicken! (*Totally losing it*.) WE ARE UNDONE!

WILL  
It’s just Drama Club. And chicken club — And D&D. Hey! (*To audience member*.) There’s the Cleric! Welcome, Sir Grimbucket BadgerDew! A priestly champion —

AUGUSTINE

We haven’t mourned Henry, we haven’t read the will — We have a show in five —   
  
 GEORGE

Four minutes — A show in four minutes.

JOHN

FOUR MINUTES PLACES!

LIZ  
Here’s your script! My hand is cramping.

RICHARD

We’re doing *Titus Andronicus* by my brother Cuthbert! And I’ll be Titus!

AUGUSTINE

We can’t — No violence — No sex — Liz’s sister is on a war path —

LIZ

She’s doing everything she can to ruin us from her prison cell in Fotheringhay Academy.

AUGUSTINE

It’s not really a prison cell —

GEORGE

She’s being metaphorical —

LIZ

Nope! It’s a cell — She’s there for treason —

GEORGE

So we have a script for Titus by your brother Cuthbert and this new one from Liz —

WILL

I saw a hedgehog on my way to school today! (*All gasp*.)

GEORGE

A hedgehog? No!

AUGUSTINE

This urchin-show torments us!

LIZ

Malignant spirits —

WILL

Their weird little rolly-ball thing they do!   
  
 JOHN

Disgusting!

GEORGE

Spiny mammals found in hedgerows! Not cute at *all*! —

RICHARD

This explains *everything*.

THOMAS

Sweet bodements! Gus — Are you okay? My hand — If you need stability.

GEORGE

Finally! Agreement — We all hate hedgehogs.

AUGUSTINE

It says in this spreadsheet that Henry interprets all omens. But Henry is dead! (*She cries*.)   
  
 JOHN

Who among us is the vice augurer?

RICHARD

Stand back! I understudy the interpretation of *all* the harbingers!

WILL

And?

RICHARD

Hedgehogs are *bad*!

GEORGE

A hedgehog raised a little black flag this morning. How he did that with those stubby arms, I don’t know. But it foretells our tragic outcome: No memorial — No reading the will — A play in four minutes — And now we learn Henry left no plan for succession. I’m sorry, we’re *screwed*.

LIZ

I did coin the word ‘Teen’ last year — It means *pain*.

THOMAS

To think o' th' teen that I have turned you to!

AUGUSTINE

Gah — You are so gross! You slubber our agenda! — Read the will!

LIZ

Soft! — Let George speak!

Scene Three — The Company Reads the Will

Augustine

Jackdaws — we wilt read the will now! What? I AM NOT BOSSY.

GEORGE

“I, Henry Carey, Earth Science teacher, Second Lord Hunsdon, Founder and Artistic Director of the Newington Butts Dinner Theater” —   
  
 WILL

You said “Butts”!

AUGUSTINE

I’ll crack that empty death’s-head of yours! (*She clocks WILL on the head*.)

WILL

Dismount thy tuck — Dilate!   
  
 GEORGE

The Newington Butts Dinner Theater — home to theatricals great and small —   
  
 RICHARD

I was in their summer stock version of “Grease”!

*HENRY II re-enters, KATHY following with ironing.*

HENRY II

I forgot my backpack. Thanks for helping me —

KATHY

I was in the parking lot about to leave when —

HENRY II

I think I left it somewhere over — Well I don’t know. I’m forgetful. Sorry!

KATHY

It’s just your brain is growing and developing. I’ll help you look —   
  
 JOHN

What’s a “Brain”?

GEORGE

“And Staff Advisor to the East Cheap High School Drama Club, do argal bequeath” —

HENRY II

Is this the will?

WILL

I do not shed drops of sorrow — There’s something in my eye!

AUGUSTINE

Dog at denotement Henry Two — you should be writing this!   
  
 HENRY II

I can’t find my minutes! And how do we know this will is real, huh?

RICHARD

Where is it writ — that Henry down-gyved to drabbing?

AUGUSTINE

Henry didn’t associate with prostitutes!

LIZ

You drop fire!

WILL

I do my duty to Henry, Sir!

THOMAS

Guys! All this quarrel! I know it’s a natural reaction to stress, but it the *dunnest.*

GEORGE

“Doves do bequeath the following to my heir apparents.”   
  
 WILL

What do we get?

GEORGE

I’m gonna read this kinda fast because curtain’s in three minutes.

JOHN

THREE MINUTES CURTAIN!

GEORGE

(*To the audience*.) “I Henry leave a silver bowl worth £5 to Richard Burbage.”

RICHARD

I *love* that bowl.

AUGUSTINE

You’re drunk on illusion.

GEORGE

“A 30-shilling gold piece each to William Kempe, John Heminges and Henry II.”

WILL

Thanks, man. (*To HENRY II and JOHN*.) Big ups to you, froozles!

JOHN

I was worried he’d leave me out — I’m just a freshman.

HENRY II

(*Writing*) Stupid Drama Club in Nothing Town Develops Stockholm Syndrome with Stupid Teacher — He leaves them crap and they do nothing. It’s wondrous sensible —

AUGUSTINE

If you feel that way, why don’t you leave? Like, really — For real this time?

KATHY  
“Please return to Henry II” — Is this your backpack? The chicken had it —

HENRY II

John — You coming? No? Fine! You coming Kathy? Can you drop me at Starbucks?

*HENRY II exits, KATHY following.*

GEORGE

“20 shillings in gold to Thomas Pope and George.”   
  
 THOMAS

I grow pale through lack of blood —

WILL

See the school nurse for some leeches —

GEORGE

“And to my apprentice Augustine Phillips, along with a cittern, a bandora and a lute, all pending the expiration of her term of years in her indenture of apprenticehood.”

AUGUSTINE  
He left me a lute?

WILL  
*And* his bandora. — I’m wonder-wounded!   
  
 GEORGE

“Plus, to Augustine, my mouse-colored velvet hose” —   
  
 WILL

You dissemble! — He promised *me* those mouse-colored hose!

GEORGE

“My black taffeta suit and white doublet” —

WILL  
His doublet? It won’t even fit you!

GEORGE

“My purple cloak, my sword and dagger, and my bass viol.”

WILL

You don’t even play the bass viol! I do!

AUGUSTINE

Why would he leave me all his personal belongings?  
  
 RICHARD

Not true! He left me a *bowl* — To hold my inner emptiness.

AUGUSTINE

Didn’t he have a family? Oh god — We were it! And we failed him! (*She cries*.)

LIZ

Can we maybe do a two to three-minute rehearsal?   
  
 RICHARD

Why is Liz talking? You don’t even go here!   
  
 GEORGE  
“And finally, £5 to be split among the hired men of the company which I am of.”

RICHARD

(*To the AUDIENCE*.) £5 split – How many ways?

THOMAS

You’re all rich!   
  
 WILL

Tom, we need to have a talk about fractions.

LIZ

He left me nothing —

AUGUSTINE

He probably just couldn’t, Liz.

RICHARD

I heard you’re *homeschooled*.   
  
 LIZ

I just thought —

RICHARD

Henry always went against the hair! Him and me — We’re *individualists*.

LIZ

I thought he appreciated me for my ability to create things of enduring value.

AUGUSTINE

Maybe if you’d been more responsible?

LIZ  
I’m the playwright!   
  
 WILL

A toast! To Henry! Not that, Henry — That Henry. Dead Henry. To Really Dead Henry!

THOMAS

Remember when the Plague came through, and we had to cancel “Twelve Angry Men”?   
  
 GEORGE

Henry got the cast through it!

RICHARD

Remember when we had to give up the theater for dodge ball?

WILL

Those were dun days!

THOMAS

The dunnest!

WILL

Because of Henry — *And* the four elements — We placed at State last year!

AUGUSTINE

Remember when problems with the principal made us move to the portable classroom?

WILL

It fusts! And it was Henry who got us out — Into fresh air and sunshine!

THOMAS  
Falls purpose!

RICHARD

I don’t want to brag, but —

WILL

(*Holding palm up at RICHARD*.) Talk to the fable! On the night of —

RICHARD

On the night of December 29th, 1598, the theatre was dismantled —

WILL

By the Burbage brothers! You and Cuthbert — We *know*.

RICHARD

But some of these flowerets in the audience haven’t heard the story yet!

WILL  
Tell me — Who’s gonna wanna hear it? The ones here for Poultry Club or the D&D players? And at the end of the story — Does Cuthbert go to Dartmouth?

RICHARD

You’re FAT!

WILL

Why thank you — I *am* amiable and satisfied!

RICHARD  
On the night of December 29th, 1598, myself, my brother Cuthbert, and ten to twelve ifies and jaceys, just like you —

AUGUSTINE

Fie! Don’t call them that!

LIZ

You are such a dick, Richard.

RICHARD

I am no fleer — Call them what?   
  
 AUGUSTINE

“Ifies” and “Jaceys”? “Jaceys.” — Really?   
  
 RICHARD  
It just means “Gorgeous Freshman Girl.” As in, Hashtag: “Jacey, will you go to the prom with me?” Like her — (*Picking up guitar* — *Flirts with woman in the audience.*)Do you like Wings?Shall I play you “Live and Let Die”? LIZ | AUGUSTINE | GEORGE

Richard, just give it a rest. | The freshmen are off limits! | Should I keep reading?

WILL

Forgive his fawning and sneering —

RICHARD

Smulkin! Modo! Tom o’ Bedlam!

WILL  
Flibbertigibbet!

RICHARD

(*At WILL*.) Tell me — How do those forks of yours support the flote of your fatness?

AUGUSTINE

(*At WILL*) He pokes not at the fools’ zanies foison —

RICHARD

Yes, I do! He’s fulsome fat. Look at him!

WILL

I eat this pizza with formal constancy —

GEORGE

Enough fetches! You guys! The audience is *here*. Some of these people paid for a show that we have script for — That we haven’t cast or rehearsed — That starts in one minute!  
  
 JOHN

ONE MINUTE TIL CURTAIN! Show of hands — Who wants to just have a Dungeons and Dragons Club meeting?

RICHARD

My brother and I carried the beams that built this very theater —

HENRY II

(*From the audience, where he’s been seated for a while*.) I think I speak for every eanling in the audience when we say that we’re tired of your derogatory terminology.   
  
 AUGUSTINE

I’d rather be rack’d than hear more from you!

RICHARD

Everyone knows Henry had a thing for this flirt-gill!

AUGUSTINE

You fall off!

RICHARD

Same as the last school — That’s why she transferred. Her reputation — fordid. (*To THOMAS*) W.F.S. — Am I Right?   
  
 JOHN

*(At RICHARD*.) See, that’s a perfect example of this pattern of derogatory behavior!

LIZ

(*At RICHARD*.) You fain frieze!  
  
 HENRY II

Richard — You don’t care about the art form — or the “conversation” — or the canon!

GEORGE

As stage manager — *I* care about cannons — Need one at the start of every show!

HENRY II

Not cannons — *the* canon — Oh never mind! (*Walking to the stage*.) It’s just hurtful when you say we suffer from W.F.S — ‘Weird Freshman Syndrome’.

WILL

Mercutio: That girl laughs at the most random things! Benvolio: Yeah, she has W.F.S. #W.F.S. [#freshman](https://www.urbandictionary.com/tags.php?tag=freshman)[#frosh](https://www.urbandictionary.com/tags.php?tag=frosh)[#freshie](https://www.urbandictionary.com/tags.php?tag=freshie)[#froshie](https://www.urbandictionary.com/tags.php?tag=froshie)[#freak](https://www.urbandictionary.com/tags.php?tag=freak)

GEORGE

We’ll never have a production at this rate! You’re all *fopped*!   
  
 THOMAS

Gus — I hope that through my dedicated enthusiasm —

RICHARD

(*To AUGUSTINE*) Did Henry take you to his feather-bed?

AUGUSTINE

No! I’m a role model!

RICHARD

Show you its *favors*?

LIZ

What is your fashion? Leave her alone — Read the script!

RICHARD

Is that why he left you everything? You get his doublet — and we all get frippery?

Scene Four — The Airing of Grievances and an Uprising

AUGUSTINE

Sooth!

RICHARD

She is splenetive!

AUGUSTINE

For three years, all I’ve heard about is how your brother Cuthbert got into Dartmouth!   
  
 RICHARD

Dartmouth’s a good school. It’s competitive!

AUGUSTINE

You know, your brother Cuthbert left the Drama Club finances in *shambles*.

RICHARD

I am shent! Stop this sick offence!  
  
 AUGUSTINE

He never even sent business sponsors their season tickets!

JOHN

The manager of the FroYoYoYo was pissed when I called to ask for a donation this year.

THOMAS

But Pizza Paunch always delivers because I’m on the inside track.

RICHARD

My brother Cuthbert’s majoring in business!

AUGUSTINE

You Burbages are all *smilets* —   
  
 LIZ

Signifying *nothing*!

RICHARD

My parents are big donors!

*KATHY enters, pulling loaded costume rack.*

KATHY

I thought instead of driving all the way back to work, I should help with costumes — John showed me her sketches for *Titus Andronicus*, so I pulled these.

GEORGE

We’re doing Henry the Fourth — In one minute.

JOHN

ONE MINUTE PLACES!

WILL

Your dad’s ‘Sir Reverence’ — We all hate him! — And your *mom*?

RICHARD

Sneck up about my mom!

JOHN

Just — Why can’t you all say, “Thank you, places”?

LIZ

It’s because of Henry that we went to Disney last year —

AUGUSTINE

We performed at Epcot Center!

LIZ

In Little France — Though that was hard for me — Because I hate the French.   
  
 ALL

We *know*.

RICHARD

Quit this skimble-skamble stuff! I’M IN CHARGE! We’re doing *Titus*.   
  
 GEORGE

We better start — John — Let’s go to the booth — Bring the chicken.

AUGUSTINE

NOBODY MOVE! We’ll be finished — when time hath sow’d a grizzle on thy case!   
  
 WILL

Mouse-colored tights! And a lute! What else was she getting?   
  
 AUGUSTINE

You *spleen*! I was obviously his *favorite*!

RICHARD

My star-crossed sonty —

AUGUSTINE

Don’t call me that!

RICHARD

My slug-a-bed —

WILL

I’m a Joy Machine!

RICHARD

My Dad pays for everything!

HENRY II

Money is the great corruptor!   
  
 AUGUSTINE

(*To RICHARD.*) That explains your fancy shoons.

WILL

(*To RICHARD.*) And why you get all the leads, despite your lack of talent!

AUGUSTINE

With the show in — When?

GEORGE

Right now — This minute.

JOHN

Curtain riseth!

GEORGE  
What’s a curtain?

AUGUSTINE

Everyone in the show has to volunteer at least 20 hours. We’ve got a clipboard —  
  
 JOHN

Should I pass it? (*To an AUDIENCE member*.) Here you go — And here’s a pencil.

GEORGE

They’re not going to know how to use that. (*To audience member*.) It’s like a quill —

WILL

They can’t read or write! (*Whispers.*) *Illiterate masses.*

AUGUSTINE

Fine! We’ll just demonstrate! (*To audience member*.) Could I have that clipboard back? — Yeah, I know — That clip is something, right? Wow. Okay —

GEORGE

Maybe use the white board?   
  
 AUGUSTINE

(*To the audience*.) I’m drawing little stick figures of the different volunteer positions —

JOHN

If you drew them big —

HENRY II

Finally! Something *different*. Springe the *visual learners*!

WILL

The groundlings can’t read or write — Look at them!

THOMAS

I also — visual aid — You, Gus? Juice box?

RICHARD

(*To audience*.) You scrimers seem content to stand in peanut shells —

WILL

They’re all spongy! — Drunk — Especially the Chicken people. Look —   
  
 LIZ

Saturated! They can play the armies —

RICHARD

What armies?

LIZ

The armies in my new play — The one I just wrote? — *Henry the Fourth*?

RICHARD

We’re doing *Titus*! I AM TITUS!

AUGUSTINE

(*At white board*.) Do you think I can erase coach’s drills?

LIZ  
To show the movement of English archers on English soil! Great — I’ll get popcorn!

WILL

What’s a “push-up”?

AUGUSTINE

No — To explain the Drama Club volunteer jobs to the illiterate masses!

RICHARD

A ‘push-up’ is a conditioning exercise performed in a prone position by raising and lowering the body with the straightening and bending of the arms while keeping the back straight and supporting the body on the hands and toes — I will demonstrate!

LIZ

It’s an ongoing challenge to write theater for an audience marked by a lack of familiarity with language and literature —

AUGUSTINE

Will, John, Henry Two — I’ll draw, and you act out the volunteer jobs when we say them — (*Hands clipboard back to AUDIENCE member*.) Don’t play with the clip, you shoughs — Circulate!

LIZ

Everybody just wants to binge-watch bear-baiting! Lowbrow philistines!

AUGUSTINE

(*At an audience member*.) See the choices? Just mark an X!   
  
 LIZ

I cannot abide this mediocrity!

AUGUSTINE

Richard, stop doing push-ups!

RICHARD

37!

WILL

I’ll be the ticket seller — (*To JOHN and HENRY II.*) And you try to buy a ticket.

AUGUSTINE

Do it in pantomime!

GEORGE

This scant shows well — The audience is asking themselves if this is the show?

LIZ

(*Attempts to pick up the chicken*.) Would you prefer a cock-a-hoop to theater?

GEORGE

Leave the poultry out of this!

HENRY II

I have the binder and the by-laws — *Se offedendo*!

AUGUSTINE

They don’t know Latin!   
  
 HENRY II

I can’t take minutes if I’m miming! And I can’t take minutes! They’re against everything I stand for! Does Jim Morrison wear Dockers for Men? No! Leather Pants Only!

THOMAS

I see your enigmatic dilemma, tiny rocker dude. Tap me in!

GEORGE

(*To HENRY II*) Go count concessions.

HENRY II

This club is stupid! This play is dumb! I’m *trying* to integrate textual and acting criticism — But I hate you all! I’m leaving!

WILL

Okay, I’m selling pig-nuts — You pretend to buy them!

THOMAS

They might sell better if we call them *peanuts* instead of “pig-nuts”.

HENRY II

I said I’m leaving!  
  
 WILL

Okay, bye — Whatever!

*HENRY II exits slowly, looking back.*

AUGUSTINE

You can’t sell peanuts —   
  
 LIZ

Nut allergies?

GEORGE

But — The selfsame flight *stands* on peanuts!

JOHN

I just feel for those kids who can’t because of the peanut issue — I propose a sequestration!

AUGUSTINE

I’m the treasurer! I propose —   
  
 JOHN

(*To audience*.) How many of you want a Nut-Free Zone in the peanut gallery?   
  
 AUGUSTINE

Richard, will you get up?

RICHARD

62!

WILL

Quit showing off!

RICHARD

My workout —  
  
 GEORGE

I always need help painting sets. (*WILL, JOHN and THOMAS “paint*”.)

AUGUSTINE

Lights — (*See above*, *Etc.*)

WILL

Richard, this Crossfit thing’s a sect — A cult!

GEORGE

(*To the audience*.) I am so uncomfortable speaking onstage — I’m not a performer! But — Rest assured — We have a show. Right? A show? At some point in time — We’ll have some lights and — Well, the sun — And music — Or Will’s jingle bells and —

RICHARD

88 — Self-bounty!

WILL  
Cry “Courage! To the field!” — Go to 100!

THOMAS

(*Closing pizza box*.) And, being done, thus Pizza Paunch away doth go —   
  
 LIZ

My play has sallies! Trenches! Tents! (*To an audience member*.) And we will need you to play a polyphonic motet for it — in Latin!

WILL

(*Pretending to conduct*.) This D&D Club’s several bastardy will play a rousing sennet!

AUGUSTINE

Where’s the trumpet?

LIZ

Yes! We need a musical phrase indicating each and every ceremonial entrance!

RICHARD

(*Pausing his push-ups with a burpee*.) I demand one each time I enter! (*He resumes*.)

WILL

Drums are *big.* (*At audience*.) Can any of you keep a rhythm?

JOHN

(*Pulling a drum from his backpack*.) It’s called a tambour.

GEORGE

Drums are capable of communicating many different moods —

WILL  
Give me that! (*Playing the drum*.) I’ve shark’d up a list of resolutes —

LIZ

Reflecting the plots of plays —

AUGUSTINE

Who has the tambourine?

JOHN

I think it’s in my backpack?

AUGUSTINE

Well — Get it out! They need to feelthe theater feeling —

*WILL hits drum.*

AUGUSTINE

(*To audience*.) Right now — You see — We’re *on the boards*!

RICHARD

(*Stands and does deep squat with arms above*.) It’s named that because of *my dad*!

AUGUSTINE

(*To audience*.) A tambourine is a small drum consisting of a circular frame with jingle-thingies. See? It’s played by striking with the knuckles or shaking — Like this! (*She shakes and strikes*.) Do you think you can do that?

JOHN

But you said *I* play the percussive instruments —

AUGUSTINE

Don’t be greedy, John! They have to learn! (*Handing tambourine to an audience member*.) Now anytime you sense things heightening, you just shake this. (*Shakes*.)

JOHN

Dog-Eat-Dog! Oh — Sure — They lure you with *keys* but then they take your shaker!

WILL bangs drum.

AUGUSTINE

Where’s your triangle?   
  
 JOHN

I think it’s in this zippered pocket —

WILL  
What’s a “zipper”?

RICHARD

104! (*Gasping*.) A triangle is — a bar of — metal — bent into a triangle shape — struck with — a metal beater — giving a high-pitched — ringing tone — (*Collapses*.)

JOHN strikes the triangle.

LIZ

Struck! Shaken! Rubbed and scraped! Not unlike Henry the Fourth.

WILL

I guess it’s arm day.

RICHARD

(*Lying on the floor*.) Push-ups are a compound exercise –  
  
 WILL

(*Takes triangle*.) Circling back now, rewind, I think it’s *zero* volunteer hours — (*Ding*.)  
  
 RICHARD

(*Slowly standing*.) Sure, you’ve all sold some cookies, washed a few minivans —

AUGUSTINE

This Drama Club is financially self-sustaining.

RICHARD

Nope.

AUGUSTINE

The East Cheap Drama Club pays for itself!

RICHARD

You and your saws.

AUGUSTINE

They’re no mere scutcheon!

RICHARD

You seel your eyes up as oak!

AUGUSTINE

The Drama Club’s scarfed! — With flags flying!

GEORGE

I raised the red flag of history this morning.

RICHARD

It’s *scotch’d*! All the Henrys — had a secret patron!

AUGUSTINE

Liz?

LIZ

My parents don’t even know I’m here!

AUGUSTINE

(*At RICHARD*.) The fadge — It all falls into place!

WILL

(*To audience*.) We do not condone lying to parents.   
  
 JOHN

I wrote your last three papers!

WILL

That’s lying to my own conscience, it’s not the same at all.

RICHARD

The ultimate success of this company has been determined by *my family*.

AUGUSTINE

I don’t believe you!

RICHARD

(*To the audience*.) My dad was a great man!

GEORGE

Places for *Henry the Fourth*. All places.

JOHN

ALL PLACES! Just — GO THERE!

RICHARD

The Burbage Family pork-barreling extends from the beginning of *time*.

WILL  
When the Burbages wrote their first donation check, dinosaurs roamed the Earth!

RICHARD

Leading this Drama Club is my birthright!

AUGUSTINE

Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions, and spirit — Do give thee fivefold blazon!

RICHARD

(*To AUGUSTINE*.) Bootless biddy!

WILL

When the Burbages held their first silent auction, there were only single-cell organisms!  
  
 RICHARD

You’re a single-cell organism!  
  
 JOHN

What’s a single-cell organism?!

AUGUSTINE

Just because your parents have money doesn’t mean —

RICHARD

My dad was a joiner — He put *lumber together*.

WILL

No one cares!  
  
 RICHARD

Lumber together, Will. Wood — *together*.

WILL

I know what that means!

RICHARD

My dad led the first group of actors to be protected —

AUGUSTINE

Not this again —   
  
 RICHARD

Under the 1572 statute against rogues and vagabonds!

THOMAS

Which Henry was that under?   
  
 HENRY II  
(*Re-entering*.) I hate having to go by a rule book! Let’s burn it! (*Looks around*.) No?

KATHY

(*Enters, carrying Henry’s stuff*.) According to subsection B tab 4, Mrs. Henry — Henry the second. Taught Sewing and cooking.

LIZ

NO! — Henry the Second was married to Eleanor of Aquitaine —

THOMAS

You lost me.

WILL

You can go now, *MOM*. God!   
  
 LIZ

It’s a precursor to the Henriad, the *tetralogy*?

KATHY

I just have your pill for — You know — Antibiotics — For that cyst on your —

WILL

The cyst *on my butt*? Thanks, mom! I don’t think they all heard you!

JOHN

What are pills and what are antibiotics?!

LIZ

Henry the reformer? Henry — Opponent of Becket? Conqueror of Ireland? Henry the Wedlock-breaker? Henry — Rosamond’s Lover?   
  
 ALL

…  
  
 LIZ

Do you people ever read?

WILL

I don’t need to — John here writes my papers.

RICHARD

Before my dad’s statute against rogues and vagabonds, the Drama Club got robbed every time we went to regionals!

GEORGE

No one is doubting your dad, son. But we’re here to do a show. Please, God?   
  
 THOMAS

I yearn for a collaborative spirit —   
  
 GEORGE

A stewardship of the art form —   
  
 JOHN

A congress —

LIZ

Those other High Schools are garbage! Worse than the French!  
  
 AUGUSTINE  
Richard, we all appreciate what your parents have done, but —

WILL

To Richard’s *Dad* — A Great joiner of lumber!

RICHARD

This stage didn’t build itself! It used to be *wood*.

GEORGE

Actually, I helped Mister Henry with all construction.

AUGUSTINE

(*To the AUDIENCE*.) That is another good way to fulfill your volunteer obligations.

WILL

(*To the AUDIENCE*.) Or do what I do and do nothing.

AUGUSTINE

Okay! Richard, with Henry gone now —   
  
 RICHARD

I will be ruler!   
  
 AUGUSTINE

No, with Henry gone now, it’s time for a change!

RICHARD

My dad was handsome, charming, tactful, witty and honest —

WILL

Out, out, brief candle!   
  
 RICHARD

And I will serve in his stead.

AUGUSTINE

But you haven’t *earned* your leadership. (*To audience member*.) This would be a good moment to shake the tambourine! If you’re going to hold it — You have to *listen*.

RICHARD

We’re a legacy family. It says so, in the program —   
  
 AUGUSTINE

That only Liz got sponsors for!

WILL

(*To RICHARD*.) You’re a cone head! A giant chicken!

GEORGE

I take offense at using the word ‘chicken’ as a derogative —

RICHARD

(*To WILL*.) You’re a cockatrice!

GEORGE

As do many in the Poultry Club. Show of hands —

JOHN

(*Will taking the triangle*.) Hey! That’s *mine*.   
  
 WILL

You’re a dum-dum! (*Ding.*)

HENRY II

Not that I’m into archives or systems — All that stuff is square! But I do have a copy of our latest program — right here in the back of my binder. Kathy —

RICHARD

Give me that! (*Taking program from KATHY*.) Thanks, Will’s Mom.

KATHY

Do you even know my name?

JOHN

(*Retrieving large cymbals from his backpack*.) the cymbal is a percussion instrument consisting of a concave brass disk —   
  
 KATHY

Do *any* of you know my name?

JOHN

Cymbals make a crashing sound when two are struck together!

RICHARD

(*To audience*.) So, thanks to all at once and to each one!

AUGUSTINE

Shut up this shrift!

RICHARD

(*Showing program*.) See? The Burbage family is in the “Director’s Circle.” —

LIZ

The Director is dead!

JOHN strikes two large cymbals together.

Scene Five — Brewing Rebellion and Counter-Rebellion and a Romance

Throughout, percussions added to taste. PLAYERS can also gesture for the audience member(s) to shake tambourine.

AUGUSTINE

Richard, you’ve taken this seat at the helm unfairly.

GEORGE

My good lord — This play!

JOHN

Wherefore should you do this?

HENRY II

I’m all for rebellion, but this breaks all rules of performance theory.

RICHARD

My dad assembled this company and directed —

AUGUSTINE

No — he didn’t — Henry did!

LIZ

We did — with Henry!

RICHARD

Who’s “we” Liz? We all know you’re Queen Elizabeth!

WILL

Whoa — Brain melt.

LIZ

I am not! I’m just *Liz*.

RICHARD

Her first club meeting — She says we can’t have iPhones — Only she can!

LIZ

The excess of apparel and the superfluity of unnecessary foreign wares — (*To audience.)* NONE shall wear in his apparel — Any silk of the color of purple, cloth of gold —

AUGUSTINE

Are you nuts?

LIZ

Look at them! These bonnets they wear?   
  
 HENRY II

The East Cheap Drama Club has no dress code! We’re free ponies — Rebels! But we do adhere to some plan of dramatic composition!

LIZ

Well *We* do have a dress code! And it’s important to us! To the tower with all of you!

AUGUSTINE

Oh my god — What is even happening?

JOHN

This is a High School? We don’t have a “tower” —

LIZ

To — Detention! To the principal’s office!

GEORGE

Only administrative staff can refer a student to detention —

LIZ

We are Queen!

GEORGE

And we are gentlemen in ordinary — In search of script — And cast and —

LIZ

(*Stalking the audience like a puma*.) When the common people can wear bonnets — manifest decay of the *whole realm* is like to follow!

RICHARD

She may be Queen — But my dad pulled the strings — And by rights, so should I!

LIZ

He brays out! All of you — To the Pack&Play! You are banished!

AUGUSTINE

Henry decides — *Decided* — the season!

RICHARD

Look in her backpack —

LIZ  
No! Seize him!

THOMAS

(*Grabbing RICHARD*.) Come, we'll have him in a dark room and bound!

GEORGE

(*Also grabbing RICHARD*.) We will bring the device to the bar and crown thee!

AUGUSTINE

You *knew* she was Queen Elizabeth?

LIZ

We pay them a tidy sum to curb the expenditure of the people!

AUGUSTINE

You’re her goons?

GEORGE

I prefer the term ‘Attendant spirit’ —

THOMAS

A paddock — A toady — called upon for evil errands.

WILL

Thomas — George — You’re *enforcers* to this — Pale Hecate?

LIZ

Jealous much? (*Regarding THOMAS and GEORGE*.) I call that one ‘my spirit’ and that one ‘my frog’! (*She laughs*.)

AUGUSTINE

But I trusted you! I — I — Loaned you my curling iron!

RICHARD

(*TO THOMAS and GEORGE*.) Bastinado! (*He spits*.) Beshrew both your houses!  
  
 GEORGE

Careful — He carries a bodkin!

LIZ

Measure his sword, Frog! And if it’s too long — Break it!   
  
 HENRY II

I bring technical knowledge and a communicative artistic spirit while adapting to the unique needs of each production, director, and playwright. — Not that I believe in rules! — but I’ll consult the by-laws! Kathy?

LIZ

Our laws are meant to simply control behavior — To ensure that a specific class structure is maintained.   
  
 RICHARD

My dad was a great man — A joiner of *wood*. Wood *together*!

LIZ

Prithee — Your father was a wealthy man looking to move above his station!

AUGUSTINE

Will — Open her backpack!

WILL

This meeting is a proof of constancy —

JOHN

Will’s mom — My anxiety — Can you make me some hot curdled milk?

LIZ  
(*To the audience*.) Listen not to this patch! Richard cannot lead this Company — It’s a bad solution. I hate bad solutions more than the French!

KATHY

Try doing some deep breathing —

LIZ

Bow before us! We are your praetor!

GEORGE

(*To WILL*) Unhand her ladyship’s property!

LIZ

Only Royalty can wear clothes trimmed with ermine!

WILL

(*Opening Liz’s backpack*.) What have we here? A ruff?

HENRY II

Lace is *revolutionary*!

AUGUSTINE

It is immensely time consuming to make!

WILL

Therefore — it’s extremely expensive!

AUGUSTINE

“I missed my bus” — Yeah, right!

WILL

She shows up in loose wool like the rest of us —

LIZ

We are a man of the people!

WILL

The bad teeth and the shaved forehead should have been a giveaway!

AUGUSTINE

(*Pawing through LIZ’s backpack*.) And what’s this? A purple velvet frock *trimmed with ermine.* Liz! (*All bow immediately, if resentfully*.)

THOMAS

I’m unable to judge stars in the presence of the sun!

LIZ

All rise and greet your Queen!

RICHARD

Henry the Fourth may have let you think he was the director —

AUGUSTINE

Because he was!   
  
 RICHARD

But my *dad* had final say.

HENRY II

You think I’m a “Creative Diplomat” — “Objective”? A “liaison”? Well — I live to destroy! To shatter expectations! But, um, actually, according to the Drama Club By-Laws — the place that Kathy’s pointing to — Thanks, Kathy — Richard’s right.

LIZ

We wear a locket with a picture of our dead mother — But she still has her head. See?  
  
 AUGUSTINE

Richard can’t be right! Read it again — You’re the dramaturg!

LIZ

We own 2,000 pairs of gloves!

RICHARD

He did bewray his practice, and received!

LIZ

It just feels so good to let you guys know who we really are!

HENRY II

I have a passion for thoughtful theater and this is not it!

WILL

Dude —

RICHARD

We *carried the wood*. And put it *together.*   
  
 AUGUSTINE

But Liz writes the plays!

GEORGE

(*To the audience*.) I’m sorry — We were hoping to give you a show tonight, instead we seem to be caught up in a web of usurpation, succession and buy-outs.

JOHN

George. Give me the keys.   
  
 LIZ

Enough of this! We’ll consult our royal astrologer! (*Goes to her iPhone*.)

HENRY II

When I’m an upperclassman — I will right these wrongs!

AUGUSTINE

I don’t even care if I’m in charge, I just don’t want *you* to be in charge, Richard! I’d rather have *Will* in charge.

WILL

And I will do as little as possible.

THOMAS

I see how upset you are, Gus — And I just want to offer that I do have experience as the ‘Person in Charge’ at the Pizza Paunch.   
  
 AUGUSTINE

That just means you’re in charge when the manager takes breaks!

LIZ

He galls — (*steps*) — his kibe — (*foot*) — on our robe! (*To RICHARD*.) Stop that!

THOMAS

I’d like you to please redirect this hostility — It’s upsetting Gus.

AUGUSTINE

(*Crying*.) It’s over! We’re sorry to gallow!

RICHARD

These innocent names are not frightened. They bind to me as by oath or promise! (*Approaching an audience member*.) They gage — See? They are *gaged*!

AUGUSTINE

You’re a canker!

RICHARD

I’m a sweet, lovely rose!

WILL

Does anyone want the last slice of pizza?

THOMAS

It’s all gone.

JOHN

I’m consumed with loss! First Henry — Now you, George! I looked up to you!

HENRY II

Like translators — Dramaturgs are treated with suspicion from *all sides*!

KATHY

I know it’s hard — You all have a lot of strong feelings. But you’re friends, right?

RICHARD

Release these bilboes — (*Wrestling away*.) — And berattle me not!

HENRY II

I’m the memory of this stupid process! And I don’t believe in binders or by-laws or last wills and testaments! I’m like SuperMan when he’s in his ice cave with Lois — Alone and aloof! I need *no one*. NO ONE! (*Exits*.)

RICHARD

Is it so behoveful to bear hard your new King?

AUGUSTINE

I just can’t believe it — You? You’re in charge?

RICHARD

Yep! And my first order as King is a diet for this bawcock! (*Poking WILL*.) Your body’s round and tight as a bombard!

WILL

(*To RICHARD*) Your mum is so fat — Her patronus is pizza!

RICHARD

His belly beetles o’er — It’s disgusting!

LIZ

We are Queen! We are the playwright! We are fluent in French, Italian and Latin —

WILL

(*To RICHARD*) The thing about ‘Your Mum’ jokes — is that they’re all old and overly used — Like your mum!

LIZ

And we speak the defunct tongue of Cornish!   
  
 RICHARD

My dad was a Great Man!

LIZ

In Corwall they drink Eggy-hot. Eggy-hot is hot beer whisked with eggs and sugar, sometimes flavored with rum, but you do not know that and we do and therefore we shall be the new ruler of the East Cheap Drama Club — In perpetuity.

WILL

She is a beauty —

AUGUSTINE

Focus, Will!

LIZ

In Cornish — Ear-bosoms — are the glands in your neck. When they’re swollen, you say “my ear-bosoms are down”! (*Laughs*.)

WILL

(*To LIZ*.) That very time I saw, but thou couldst not —

GEORGE

Even though I’ve broken my sacred stage manager trust with all of you — I’d like to remind you that we currently have no show. We have an audience, but not even a hope — The faintest whisker of a possibility — That there might be a show tonight.

KATHY

Should I get more snacks?

LIZ

(*To WILL*.) Cornish is hardworking — Dependent on landscape — *Earthy*.

WILL  
(*To LIZ*.) Flying between the cold moon and the earth —

LIZ

Demonstrative of how important — animals — are to daily life!

RICHARD

Will you two *get a room*?

LIZ

(*To WILL*.) Nestle-bird!

WILL

(*To LIZ*.) Cupid arm'd!

LIZ

Choogy-pig!

WILL  
At a fair vestal throned by the west —

RICHARD

(*To GEORGE*.) As your New King — I’ll give you my bowl!

GEORGE

By my buckler — I cannot be bought!

WILL

(*To LIZ*.) Looses his love-shaft smartly —

LIZ

Bowldacious!

WILL   
Airymouse — As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts —

JOHN

(*To the audience*.) Natural! Magical! Wondrous strange! First the hedgehog — And then during third period — the bird of night did sit — Even at noon-day upon the cafeteria —

GEORGE

(*To the audience*.) Hedgehogs and night birds — Look — You should all just go home!

LIZ

(*To WILL*.) But we might see young Cupid's fiery shaft?

WILL

(*To LIZ*.) Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon —

LIZ

(*To WILL*.) Let’s to under the bleachers for a game of tiddleywinks!

JOHN

(*To GEORGE*.) When these prodigies do so conjointly meet — let not men say —

“These are their reasons. They are natural.”

THOMAS

For I believe they are portentous things —

WILL

(*To LIZ*.) And the imperial votaress passed on — In maiden meditation, fancy-free!

LIZ

Call me ‘Imperial Votaress’ again —

WILL

Oh, Liz —   
  
 LIZ

Oh, Will!

They embrace.

AUGUSTINE

You’re clearly upsetting the underclassmen!

WILL

You’re in the bowers, Richard —

LIZ

Will?

AUGUSTINE

Brainsickly!

LIZ

Will you be my *boyfriend*?

THOMAS

If you must break with the law —   
  
 RICHARD

Do it to seize power! (*Taking the by-laws from KATHY*) Thanks, Will’s mom. Look! “Subsection ‘B’, clause 32 of the East Cheap High School Drama Club bylaws state that parliamentary authority resides with the closest living heir to the founding patron.”

AUGUSTINE

And the King’s rouse the heavens shall bruit again!

RICHARD  
New play! We’re doing — Richard the Second.   
  
 LIZ

We wrote that already!

AUGUSTINE

Remember, he was *deposed*?

THOMAS

Let’s try to start our statements with “I feel”?   
  
 AUGUSTINE

(*At RICHARD*) I feel like I want to kill you!  
  
 RICHARD

But this Richard the Second’s about me, and my dad.

AUGUSTINE

You can’t do this!   
  
 RICHARD

It’s what Dead Henry wanted.  
  
 LIZ

We won’t write it. (*Canoodling with WILL*.) God’s Cow! — So much chest hair!  
  
 RICHARD

You don’t have to — I already did.

LIZ

Oh, really?

JOHN

Life's but a walking shadow —   
  
 THOMAS

A poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage —   
  
 GEORGE

And is heard no more. Which reminds me — If we ever get a show together — To work tech, you all need a black shirt and pants —

AUGUSTINE

It’s a theater thing.

WILL

Maybe this is a good place for drums — Or the lute?

RICHARD

I stand upon my kingdom!

THOMAS

I know this convo’s taken some detours — But I’m stoked about *Richard the Second* ‘cuz I love jousting! Did you hear that Gus? That means I *stab people from a horse*!

RICHARD   
There’s no jousting in *Richard the Second*! It’s about my brother Cuthbert at Dartmouth!

LIZ

You’re so stupid! *King Richard II*begins with Henry Bolingbroke accusing the Duke of Norfolk, Mowbray, for the Duke of Gloucester's death, the brother of King Richard II. Mowbray did not murder him. However — he does not reveal that King Richard II ordered this nor that he could have prevented Gloucester's death.

THOMAS

That was rough.

AUGUSTINE

To the whiteboard?

LIZ

Again — for the visual learners! (*She draws*.) Henry Bolingbroke accuses Duke of Norfolk — Mowbray, right? — Of killing Richard’s brother, the Duke of Gloucester —

JOHN

I have a cousin in Glucose —

LIZ

(*Still drawing*.) But Richard ordered the murder! And to settle the dispute — Richard decides to *let them joust*!

GEORGE

How are we going to show jousting onstage?

RICHARD

I will joust any man who stands in the way of my directing!

LIZ

(*Putting on her purple cloak and her Elizabethan collar*.) Only we wear that! (*Drawing.*) Richard decides later that Henry B and Mowbray shall both be banished —

HENRY II

(*Re-enters*.) Banishment is rock & roll!

RICHARD

(*To LIZ*) You! Away for life! (*To WILL*.) You — for five years!

LIZ

Mowbray predicts Henry B’s return — and his hand in Richard's downfall —

RICHARD

I am you liege! We — Royal We — We are —

LIZ

Henry B's father soon dies from sorrow at his son's exile —

RICHARD

We’re wasting time! I’ve seized Henry’s estate —

AUGUSTINE

I will cut you —

RICHARD

We are Richard the Second! The first was our dad!

GEORGE

This meeting is guttered — This play’s a ruin. We’ve done it. *We’ve killed theater*.

HENRY II

Theater survived *Starlight Express* — And *SpiderMan: Turn off the Dark*!

WILL

It can survive this!

LIZ

Subjects! — A parle — That’s French for *parlay* — I hate the French but love their language —

WILL

Okay — What?

LIZ

Big announcement! — (*Does fake trumpet*) I HAVE A BOYFRIEND!

AUGUSTINE

Why can’t these club groundlings have a say in their own future?

RICHARD

Because we are King! (*To audience*.) Do you practice against me? Against *Us*?

LIZ

Because we are Queen! And our relationship is flourishing!

WILL

The audience doesn’t have self-determination! They stand in the pit — on peanut shells!

GEORGE

But what about the ones who have allergies?

HENRY II

Meanwhile, Admiral High School is *preparing*. They’re making shows! Honing! Focusing! Finding *outlets*. With singing *and* dancing — But *edgy*!

RICHARD

Your pennyworth cannot save you from our dynasty!

LIZ

Skip the Tower! Put to silence!

THOMAS and GEORGE pull out their scabbards.

HENRY II

We write the future! Don’t you see that? NOT that I believe in rules — BUT — Kathy?

KATHY

“The Drama Club Electoral College consists of eight electors. A majority of 5.33 electoral votes is required to elect the President. Your Drama Club's entitled allotment of electors equals the number of members in its Freshman, Sophomore, Junior and Senior delegation.”

Augustine

That is so messed up!

KATHY

Should I finish ironing the costumes for *Titus Andronicus*?

WILL

That’s it — Put up our pipes. Meeting’s over.

LIZ

(*To WILL*.) You said *pipes.*

RICHARD

(*To LIZ*.) You don’t even go here! You’re *homeschooled*.

WILL

Yeah, but she writes all our plays —

LIZ

(*To WILL*.) I feel so pursy! Do you know what that means?   
  
 HENRY II

I hate rules! BUT — It is a general practice that no one can vote on a question in which he has a direct personal or pecuniary interest.

AUGUSTINE

(*At RICHARD*) Usurper!   
  
 HENRY II

Like I said: “The Burbage Family will retain creative control of the Club in perpetuity.”

RICHARD

That’s right. And the play we’re doing is Richard the Second — About my dad the Great Joiner of Lumber.   
  
 AUGUSTINE

Your dad’s named Jeff, not Richard — And we’re telling the story of Henry the Fourth — the real one — the one who killed Richard — Not you Richard, *the* Richard!

GEORGE

We’re gonna need to whiteboard this —

WILL

(*To RICHARD — With his hand like a puppet*.) Oh, that estates, degrees and offices

were not derived corruptly, and that clear honor! Were purchased by the merit of the wearer!

RICHARD

Shut up!

LIZ

(*To RICHARD*) I see thee still!

RICHARD

And on thy blade and dudgeon?

WILL

Cudgeon?

THOMAS

That’s a kind of fish — A little one, like an anchovy —   
  
 HENRY II

Anchovies on pizza — Blecch!

LIZ

Gouts of blood — Which was not so before!

RICHARD

There’s no such thing!

LIZ

Which as a grise or step —

RICHARD

Fine! We’ll do a *History* —

WILL

(*To the audience*.) Boring, right? No robots or fighter planes — Or zombies.  
  
 JOHN

Could we do Richard the Second with zombies? And use my Titus costumes?  
  
 HENRY II

(*Writing*) “Zombies.”

GEORGE

I don’t think we have the budget for — Or time — All that make-up?   
  
 WILL

But all of the freshies can be walking corpses! They’re half dead already! Look at ‘em!

LIZ

Let’s set *Richard the Second* telling *Henry the Fourth* in a dystopian future —   
  
 WILL

A barren wasteland — where people stare at screens and theater is *dead*.

HENRY II

Gotta go — My mom just texted me —

RICHARD

Or in 1597 when my dad was a joiner!   
  
 WILL

That’s really boring.  
  
 RICHARD

Putting *wood together*.   
  
 WILL

Let’s set the play within the play in — Ancient Egypt?

LIZ

The Mariana Trench!   
  
 THOMAS

The Oregon Trail!

RICHARD

But my father *joined lumber*!

AUGUSTINE

It doesn’t matter, Richard, if they shut us down.

LIZ

Our sister Mary’s been asking a lot of questions.

AUGUSTINE

You keep quiet though?

LIZ

Henry the Fourth likely starved King Richard to death — Leaves no marks on the body.

AUGUSTINE

The body! (*Cries*.) What about our memorial?!  
  
 RICHARD

We’re doing *Richard the Second*.   
  
 LIZ

We’re doing *Henry the Fourth*!   
  
 WILL

I just want to play a lead for once —   
  
 RICHARD

What? I play the leads!

LIZ

Sorry, Will, he does.

WILL

‘Cuz of this layer of grief bacon round my middle?

LIZ

You’re our go-to Comedic Sidekick!

WILL

If you’re so ‘woke’ you should let me fall in love once — Or lead a Great Battle!

THOMAS

But you can’t — because you’re fat.

AUGUSTINE

Or “Chubby” —

LIZ

Richard the Second starved to death!   
  
 RICHARD

Right? Look at you!

HENRY II

It’s true — I did the research. Bloody business.

GEORGE

The red flag then?

WILL

I’m twice the actor than you and you know it!

RICHARD

You’re at least twice the *something*.

WILL

Your mum is so fat —

HENRY II

Maybe the freshmen in the audience would like to open a dialogue about typecasting?

AUGUSTINE

STOP! We shouldn’t turn on each other — We need to unite to get this show together!

JOHN

So no “Titus Andronicus”?   
  
 LIZ

No —

AUGUSTINE

And none of us wanted to play Lavinia, anyway.

LIZ

(*To the audience*.) During a royal hunt, Aaron persuades Demetrius and Chiron to kill Bassianus, and they do so, throwing Bassianus's body into a pit and dragging Lavinia deep into the forest before violently raping her. To keep her from revealing what has happened, they cut out her tongue and cut off her hands.

WILL

Maybe not the best option for Showcase?

LIZ

From now on, we can only do Rated G –

WILL

But *Henry the Fourth* has taverns and ladies?

AUGUSTINE

We’ll need brand new costumes — Kathy?   
  
 LIZ

And to cut costs — we’ll need to find something in the public domain.

RICHARD

Aren’t you the Queen of England?

LIZ

I’m here on the down low!

THOMAS

And we should make our play a *musical*!

HENRY II   
(*Losing it*.) You wanna do something new? Something they won’t expect? Rules were made to be broken — I mean — Liz is the ruler and a playwright — Awesome. So — Let her write it! Let’s do a play within a play — within a musical! THAT SOUNDS FUN!

GEORGE

Are you okay, son?

HENRY II

I AM JUST TRYING TO KEEP UP WITH THE STENOGRAPHY!

WILL

What if the Drama Club puts on a play where the characters are from *The Crucible*?

AUGUSTINE

The Drama Club verses the current political forces of darkness!

RICHARD

No! We’re doing *Richard the Second* about me and my dad!

AUGUSTINE

On the surface, we’re telling a page out of history —

WILL

Everyone hates history —

GEORGE

I’ll just go take that red flag down —

AUGUSTINE

But we’ll comment on the backlash against artistic expression!

HENRY II

THIS DEFIES MY STRONG SENSE OF INNER LOGIC!

JOHN

Mix it up — redefine the genres?

LIZ

We are the playwright!

THOMAS

I can provide two-liter bottles of off-brand soda — and bread knots with dipping sauces!

RICHARD

No! My family pays for this — We’re doing *Richard the Second*!

THOMAS

Ranch dressing — Marinara —

WILL

We’ll do *Richard the Second* —

RICHARD

Thanks, Will —

WILL

As a play within a play within a play that’s a musical — done by puppets — who wear puppets — who do a play.

RICHARD

But I play Titus.

AUGUSTINE

It’s almost regionals — We must prepare!

GEORGE

Look at the poor audience — Half asleep — Half playing Candy Crush!

LIZ

We come together — United — to fight our rival High School — the Fighting Irish!

RICHARD

You don’t even go here!

WILL

We have a lot of work ahead of us! John — You rethink the Titus costumes for this — Just make it work. George — We’re all questioning your loyalties, but your scenic design is so good. See if you can tweak this model to read less ancient Rome and more Northumberland. And we need puppets. John — Give her back her keys — She drives the Activity Bus — Not you. Thomas — Go to Pizza Paunch — I’ll need a California Supreme — And before you ask me — No! I don’t know what California is — but I like that pizza with the spinach and the olives. Gus — You run the numbers — Find us some cash for paint and stuff. Mom’s gonna sew all the costumes and build the set — And help with props and everything — right? And we’re out of juice. And I like those granola bars with the chocolate chips? The ones with raisins are gross, mom. Yeah — We all agree. Liz — I have rewrites. More jokes — More dancing — More physical comedy! Banana peels — Stuff like that. Write the heck out of it. Henry — You help her. This is a dramaturgical emergency. We’re gonna need continuity back-up. I mean — I don’t know how you’ll track who’s where when or what they’re doing — Or even begin to put it in some logical sequence, but you’re the wordsmith! *Collaborate*. Here are the scripts and the by-laws for the Poultry Club. Good luck. Me — I am lifted up — Carried on wings of all your genius! And before I can continue — I need a nap. A good one. I’m going to feign illness and go crash in the nurse’s office. Nobody let her give me leeches! Promise me — Actually — Maybe Liz — Would you mind going to the nurse’s office with me just to make sure I don’t get leeches? And for you audience members — Who go to class even less than me — We have a map. (*Swivels white board around to show map below*.) You all should study this while we get ready. And if you’re not sure about this country in the global geographical context — You can Google it. And Chicken: You do you.

JOHN

15 minutes places!  
  
 ALL

Thank you, places!

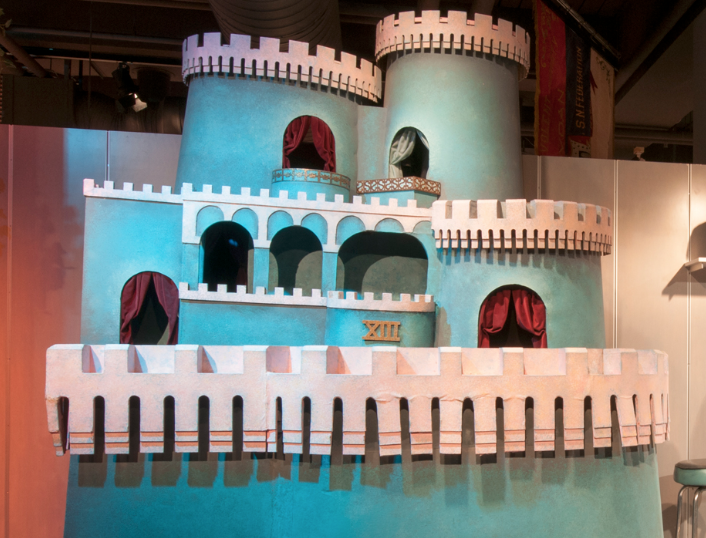


COMPANY exeunt with flourish, playing music, something stupid-yet-uplifting like “Band on the Run” by Wings.

The sound of a coach’s whistle. A dozen basketballs bounce and roll across the stage — Foreshadowing.

Intermission. (During: KATHY tidies up from ACT ONE, does she remove the corpse? Not sure, but she assembles/ touch-up paints a puppet-sized set that can flexibly transform from a royal palace to the Boar’s Head Tavern and a field in Shrewsbury, etc. Maybe THOMAS helps her.)

Let’s imagine it looks something like this:



Act TWO

Scene One — Continued Rivalry and Theatrical Iteration

LIZ enters, in full Elizabeth I regalia, wig, makeup, followed by RICHARD — dressed in a daffy red spotted cloak trimmed in white fur and stupid crown. KATHY’s still working. She works throughout. KATHY does everything.

LIZ

We are your Queen!

RICHARD

This hair! That dress — You are periwig-pated!

LIZ

We are *Elizabeth* — Your pearl.

RICHARD

I’m all that’s good in the Kingdom!

LIZ

“We are” — Bow before us! (*Kathy bows*.)

RICHARD

I refuse! I’m a pard o’ cat — A leopard! My cape has spots, see? *My mom made it*.

LIZ

“We” refuse — “We” are a leopard — It is so fundamental. Never mind! (*She trips over puppet castle, falling*.) Will’s Mom! Can you not see we were walking *right here*?

KATHY

Lady Elaine's changes to the Land of Make-Believe worry King Friday —

LIZ | KATHY

(*Still on the floor*.) What’s in that paint? | King Friday imposes new rules and restrictions!

RICHARD

Lend me thy hand, and I will give thee mine.

*RICHARD offers LIZ a fake hand* — *Classic*.

LIZ

If this be deceit —

The fake hand comes off when LIZ pulls it. Great tumult.

RICHARD

That’s my Titus hand/ My mom made it!

LIZ

Blast of thunder! / Take it back!

KATHY

I just think it would go over really well with my generation if we did Live Action episodes of ‘Mister Rogers’ —

RICHARD and LIZ

Who’s Mister Rogers?

WILL

(Entering in a super-fancy Tudor outfit.) Who’s ready to do a play within a play within a play that’s a musical — done by puppets — who wear puppets — who do a play?

LIZ | RICHARD | KATHY  
We are your creator! Your *omnipotent*! Your *girlfriend*! Now help us up! |The first fake hand my mom made was right-handed but I was like, “Don’t fence me in, Mom!” Titus is left-handed! So — I made her make a new one. | I made a flyer — See? That’s the trolley! Do you even know where the trolley *goes*? The LAND OF MAKE BELIEVE!

WILL

Mom! Such a roaring downpour — such groaning winds! Did you get granola bars?

LIZ  
Thou art our boyfriend, Will! We cannot stand! (*Full tantrum because she can’t get up*.) This partlet! — This kirtle! Petticoat! This stupid corset! We hate it! *And* this bumroll!

WILL

Thou art *terrifying*.

LIZ

*You* try wearing nine layers of clothing and see how *you* feel! You wouldn’t last one day in a Spanish Farthingale! It’s made of wood and rope!

RICHARD | KATHY | WILL

But that A-line, I mean — | Does it have pockets? | Nine layers —

LIZ

Will’s mom — If thou woulds’t — Thank you. (*She stands — Finally*.) Now stop this pudder! — So infantile! I was just saying — Richard is a purple-hued malt-worm!

WILL | RICHARD | KATHY

Upon a knife! She *stands*! | My Queen, you’ll die alone! | I wear a lot of leggings.

KATHY | LIZ | WILL

(*To audience*.) In this episode Mr. Rogers shows how a burlap bag can be many different things when one imagines it! | Will — Love me and leave me not! We command it! | Mom! You can’t sell your leggings here!

RICHARD

Stop! One at a time!

KATHY

(*To audience*.) Meanwhile — King Friday worries about an invasion of people who want to change the Land of Make-Believe —

RICHARD

We are worried, too!

KATHY

King Friday drafts border guards to protect the Land of Make Believe.

RICHARD

I need — “We” need border guards! Will’s mom — Can you organize the volunteers?

KATHY | WILL | LIZ

(*To audience*.) Show of hands — Who volunteers to protect Richard’s fragile ego? | My mom just does granola bars and juice! | Do these leggings come in different colors?

**Scene Two — Perhaps a Puppet Show? Please God.**

AUGUSTINE

(*Wheeling in tiny rack of puppet costumes.*)I pulled these tiny costumes — Kathy, can you see if they’ll work for *Henry the Fourth*? (*To WILL*.) Check your new gaskins!   
  
 WILL | KATHY  
Her majesty returns grace for grace — | Because of the border guards, Cornflake refuses to visit the castle. So, King Friday — who is mindful of this — has a cake delivered.

LIZ | RICHARD

(*To WILL*.) Our gentle gib is quite *gamesome* — | Would cake make them respect us?

WILL | KATHY

I am glazed as a donut! She smothers us in sweetness! | King Friday wants to protect his Kingdom, so he sends the Royal Fix-it Man to install punch clocks at both ends of it.

LIZ | RICHARD

He is *prime. |* To protect our reign as King Director we’ll record Time and Attendance!

AUGUSTINE | WILL

I’ve given up on love. You’re lucky, Will — | I just don’t know if new pants are worth it.

LIZ

It art ShowTime! All places! ALL BOW BEFORE US PLACES!

GEORGE

(*Yelling from light booth*.) Thou art puddled! — The show started half an hour ago!   
  
 JOHN

(*Yelling from light booth*.) 30 MINUTES AGO ALL PLACES!

KATHY

Finally! Okay — (*To audience*.) Now in this episode — Mr. Rogers brings in a donkey — whose name is Donkey *Hodie*. Get it?

AUGUSTINE | JOHN | WILL

Don Quixote? | (*Yelling from booth*.) Who’s Don Quixote? | Sane madman —

KATHY

(*To audience*.) In this episode, Donkey Hodie is welcomed to the Land of Make-Believe and (*Will is eating*) Henrietta the Cat learns how to close her mouth when she eats food.

AUGUSTINE | KATHY | LIZ

Who’s Henrietta? | (*To audience*.) Henrietta is a *cat* — She’s just adorable. | No cats!

WILL | LIZ

The Queen has propertied me — | He has a *point-devise*. |

KATHY

ALL PLACES!

AUGUSTINE

It’s not Henrietta — It’s Henry! HENRY THE FOURTH! And I don’t care about your relationship as long as you’re still down to depose Richard!

KATHY | RICHARD | WILL

Henrietta Pussycat lives in the Land of Make Believe inside a schoolhouse! | Depose *King* Richard. Call me KING DIRECTOR RICHARD! | I’m the wise fool, aren’t I?

KATHY | LIZ

Henrietta is Governess of Nice Mice! — She only says “Beautiful” and “Telephone”! | Stop this prate and puling — There’s only one monarch! — *Us*. Or is it “We”?

GEORGE | JOHN

(*Yelling*.) The show is starting! | (*Yelling*.) What’s a *telephone*?

LIZ

(*To WILL*.) Plume up! You have the opening line — It’s *quite important*.

RICHARD

Acting! (*Gesturing with fake arm*.) Hail, Rome, victorious in thy mourning weeds!

AUGUSTINE | JOHN

That’s the first line from *Titus Andronicus*! | (*From booth*.) No Titus places! No *Titus*!

WILL | RICHARD

This Drama Club performance is prorogued! We all agreed — We’re doing *Titus*?

KATHY

Henrietta Pussycat feels jealous of others when they receive special attention.

LIZ | WILL | RICHARD

(*To WILL*.) Who’s a saucy boy? | This is getting weird for me — | I’m not jealous!

KATHY

Henrietta enjoys wearing fancy clothes.

AUGUSTINE | RICHARD | WILL

We’re doing *Henry the Fourth*! | My mom made this cape! | Is this codpiece necessary?

LIZ | WILL | RICHARD

(*To WILL*.) Who’s my minky princox? | I can’t take it anymore — | We’re doing Titus!

KATHY

Shaken as you all are — so wan with care! Who needs a Juice box? |

WILL | AUGUSTINE

Mom! You’re constantly hovering! | Henry! We all agreed!

KATHY

Donkey Hodie stays in the Blue Owl’s tree until he can find a place to live!

LIZ | AUGUSTINE | KATHY | GEORGE | JOHN

No! No Pussycats — No Donkeys, Will’s Mom! | We’re doing *Henry the Fourth* — But as told by *Richard the Second* — The story of USURPATION. | Donkey Hodie decides the best place for building a windmill would be in the hills behind the Castle. King Friday objects to this. | (*Yelling from booth*.) Who’s the Blue Owl?! | (*Yelling*.) PLACES!

RICHARD

LINE!

JOHN | GEORGE | KATHY

(*Yelling from booth*.) “Werewith I reigned”? | (*Yelling from booth*.) “Old John of Gaunt, time-honour'd” — | (*To audience*.) The Blue Owl is happy and inquisitive —

RICHARD | KATHY

Right! Sorry — I tried to get off-book but I had a Chemistry final. Wait — Which line? | But the Blue Owl is also known to become frustrated when things don’t go his way —

JOHN | AUGUSTINE

(*From the booth*.) What is ‘Chemistry’? | Do the line from *Henry the Fourth*!

RICHARD|LIZ

Let me try again — I feel like I want to enter here? Okay — | Will, we have an itch.

RICHARD

“Wherewith I reign'd? I hardly yet have learn'd to insinuate, flatter, bow, and bend” —

AUGUSTINE | WILL

That’s Richard’s the Second’s line! | Great! Do it again, but with a puppet. Here —

RICHARD

I should do it with a French accent? (*Does Russian accent*.) “Insinuate, flatter, bend.”

LIZ | GEORGE | JOHN

Idiot! | (*Yelling from booth*.) Cancel! | (*Yelling from booth*.) SCRIPT!

RICHARD | KATHY

*Richard the Second* reflects absolute male-preference primogeniture! That’s why *I’m the director*! My dad was a great joiner of lumber! (*Picks up Puppet Richard II — Makes him speak*.) I’ll say what I want! | (*To audience*.) The Land of Make-Believe decides they should prove to King Friday that Donkey Hodie does not bite anyone.

KATHY | WILL

(*To audience*.) Show of hands — Who thinks we should prove that the donkey doesn’t bite? | Liz — I just don’t think I’m comfortable with constant objectification —

LIZ | AUGUSTINE

I’ll drain you dry as hay! | Will’s mom! We’re not doing Mister Rogers!

WILL | RICHARD

See what I mean? Her majesty needs a filter! | I can’t work like this! Who’s directing?!

GEORGE | LIZ

(*From the booth*.) This is the start of the show — Usurpation! | In our production — Richard the Second has a personality disorder. (*At RICHARD*.) Art imitates life!

RICHARD | KATHY | AUGUSTINE

My coping skills could be better! | (*To audience*.) King Friday wants Donkey Hodie's windmill built somewhere else — | As treasurer I’ll direct this! Now —

WILL

(*Taking off his fancy jerkin*.) Liz — I’m breaking up with you! Take back this jerkin!

LIZ

Hang upon your penthouse lid! Break up with us? With *us*? We’ll have you killed!

THOMAS enters, carrying a pizza.

THOMAS

Hi — Gus! I — got-this-for-you — has — olives.

AUGUSTINE | KATHY

I only eat locally-sourced and seasonal. | You can play Mister McFeely!   
  
 WILL | RICHARD | THOMAS

Meat lovers! — (*Eats*.) | Will, we are gasted for your stomach — | What?

WILL | THOMAS | LIZ

He lays a gauntlet! | Gus — You — want — olives? | We love your meat, Will —

AUGUSTINE | KATHY

(*To audience*.) Okay! Show of hands! Who will help me depose Richard? | (*To audience*.) Henrietta brings housewarming gifts for Donkey Hodie at his unseen home.

RICHARD

*King* Richard — KING RICHARD THE DIRECTOR! Le Roi! We are *French*!

LIZ

Treason! To the tower! Guards! Seize him!

HENRY II

(*Entering, looking like Antonin Artaud as a young man, and smoking*.) During the break — I wrote my own show in literary protest I will perform it now.

AUGUSTINE | HENRY II

What are you talking about? | I made a flyer — See? That’s me — Next to Karen Finley.

HENRY II

(*A great tumult*.) Ancient waterdogs bark! And me — Rolling in the pinecones — Ow!   
  
 RICHARD

I am KING! Your KING DIRECTOR! My mom made me a cape! Stop this abstraction!

LIZ

*We* refer to ourselves in third person! The “Royal We”? It is so basic! (*All agree*.)  
  
 RICHARD | LIZ

We are King! We are KING DIRECTOR! | By the Great Wheel — *We* are not!

RICHARD

WE HAVE ROYAL DIRECTOR’S NOTES FOR ALL OF YOU!

AUGUSTINE

*Notes*?! — We haven’t even started yet!

KATHY

(*To audience*.) In *this* episode — they compare oil-based and water-based paints and the Blue Owl teaches everyone various bird names —

RICHARD | AUGUSTINE | THOMAS | HENRY II

Worst Club *ever*! | Don’t blame me! | That sounds nice. | Artaud! Dada! Fluxus!

HENRY II

Thesis! Antithesis! *Winter* of discontent — Made glorious *Summer*! HAHAHA!   
  
 WILL

We need the script for *Henry the Fourth*! Who has our *only copy*?

GEORGE  
(*From lighting booth*.) It’s in the chicken coop.

AUGUSTINE

(*To the booth*.) Green sour ringlets! Why would you do that?

GEORGE

(*Walking from the back of the house with her chicken and two folding chairs*.) Sufficient litter provides a secure foundation for chickens’ legs and feet, a soft landing for eggs, a way to gather droppings quickly and the ability to easily clean your birds’ housing.

WILL

You used the *only* copy of our script to line your chicken coop?

GEORGE

Yes. It’s an obstacle I’ve designed — as a teacher and guru — to test all of you.

LIZ

We wrote that script!   
  
 GEORGE

Let’s find the truth — Together. (*Hands off chicken.*) I had Will’s mom make John and myself Stage Manager folding director’s chairs. See? — They say Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Manager? (*To audience*.) That’s something for you all to aspire to —

WILL

It’s not too late to get this back on track! There’s what, two, three people left in the audience? Okay — Everyone — All hands in! (*They put hands in, except for Richard*.)

RICHARD

I can’t — I’m very focused and committed to Titus’s world — So I’ve been doing everything one handed. That’s *acting*.

WILL | AUGUSTINE | LIZ

Mom! — It’s time for puppets! | We’re doing *Henry the Fourth*! | *Richard the Second*!

JOHN | KATHY

(*From the booth*.) All places puppets! | In this episode — they sing a song about *feelings*. Like RAGE! I mean — (*To audience*.) Parenting is a thankless job, AM I RIGHT?

THOMAS

I’d like to just point out that in the Land of Make Believe there might be monsters?

WILL | AUGUSTINE

God, Mom! Having you here is — | LET’S DO THE PLAY WITHIN THE —

KATHY

Fine! — *Henry the Fourth*! I have some burns from all the hot glue, so that downstage pot of water came in handy — Here you go! — I didn’t have a lot of budget — So the other moms and I *made the puppets* out of what we could find — Mostly P.E. equipment!

JOHN | KATHY

(*From lighting booth*.) What’s “P.E.”? | King Henry Puppet — John of Lancaster —

HENRY II

I will pause my protest pantomime to suggest you narrate, George. You and the chicken.

GEORGE

We’re be honored. Lights up — Well, the sun is out —

*PUPPETS enter, held by WILL, RICHARD, THOMAS.*

GEORGE (CON’T)

“SCENE I. London. The palace. Enter KING HENRY, LORD JOHN OF LANCASTER, the EARL of WESTMORELAND, SIR WALTER BLUNT, and” —

JOHN

(*From the booth*.) You said *I* could read the stage directions!

*PUPPETS exit*.

WILL | RICHARD | LIZ | HENRY II

I’m the Vice President and “The fool” — I should narrate! | I’m the Director! My Dad —| | (*To WILL*.) Bring that goatish goose near to us! | All true language is incomprehensible!

WILL  
We’re in performance — And I broke up with you!

AUGUSTINE

Mounting goodyears — The *show*?

LIZ

Ay, we note the double-entendre — That’s French! (*To WILL*.) She refers to the gross and scope of our joining —   
  
 WILL | LIZ

Gramercy for that — |And ‘gross’ in sense of the gathering forces of Evil!

GEORGE | HENRY II | THOMAS

It was the hedgehogs! | Happenings! Action poetry! *Circus*! | Monsters in the tunnels —

JOHN

(*From the lighting booth*.) It was the owl in the cafeteria!

RICHARD

(*To the audience*.) YOUR KING DIRECTOR COMMANDS YOU TO OBEY!

AUGUSTINE

When did Will become Vice President?

HENRY II

When you were out with mono.

RICHARD

The question is moot! We art King Director! WE ART THE STAR!

LIZ | KATHY

Lying usurper! You’re just like Henry the Fourth! | He’s just like King Friday —

AUGUSTINE and RICHARD and WILL

We might understand these references *if we had a script*!

AUGUSTINE and RICHARD and WILL and HENRY

I’m Director! | We’re Director! |Mom’s Director! | No Director!

KATHY | THOMAS

In this episode — they trace out if there are monsters in tunnels — | Hold me.

JOHN

(*Walking from the booth*.) Are we devising now? Is this a theater game?   
  
 HENRY II

Can we do trust falls?

RICHARD

Yes, we are and Yes, we can! Royal Trust Falls!

AUGUSTINE | WILL | THOMAS

I can’t believe you’re in charge now! | Where are the puppets? | What play is this?

WILL

Act three, scene five. A garden. (*Puppet KING HENRY, LORD JOHN and SIR WALTER BLUNT entering*.) The sins of the father are to be laid upon the children!

GEORGE | RICHARD

No — I think it’s King Henry’s line — | My dad was a great joiner of lumber!

HENRY II

(*Puppets exit*.) “In the event of the untimely passing of a Henry” — Kathy! The by-laws!

AUGUSTINE | KATHY

But we have a Henry! We have you! | We’re “Creative” now — No more granola bars!

LIZ | HENRY II

This little coystrill is Henry the Fifth! | Fine, Will’s Mom! I’ll *look it up myself*!

AUGUSTINE

Puppets! Get back in here! (*Puppets re-enter, a great tumult*.)

JOHN | GEORGE

You want to say, “Puppets *Places*.” | We’re the glue — We know everything.

HENRY II

(*Reading.*) “The Burbage Family will retain creative control of the Club in perpetuity.”

RICHARD | WILL

As We were saying — | Pay the musicians, sirrah. —Farewell —

WILL begins to exit.

WILL

And I’m taking the puppets! Westmoreland — Lord John — Walter, let’s roll —

*Puppets begin to exit behind WILL*.

AUGUSTINE | JOHN | HENRY II | THOMAS

Where are you going? | D&D? Can I come? | This is Theater of Cruelty! | What?  
  
 WILL  
You can’t do your play within a play without these puppets!

RICHARD

You may my glories and my state depose! — But not puppets! I am King of those!

HENRY II

(*Writing*.) A play within a play — “Immediate unrelenting violent action” —

WILL | HENRY II

Can’t you see it? | (*Writing*.) “A spasm in which life is continually lacerated” —

LIZ

*Our* play explores the chronology of succession —

KATHY

*Our* play speaks directly to the viewer about various issues, taking the viewer on tours of factories, demonstrating experiments, crafts, and music, and interacting with his friends!

HENRY II

*Our* play has been created to drain abscesses collectively!

RICHARD

And I play all the leads! I mean we — We mean we! Me — Us! And our puppets!

WILL

(*Swiping King Henry Puppet — He squeaks*.) No — I play the lead for once! I’m Henry!

AUGUSTINE

Quit squabbling! We can’t afford it anyway! Unless Kathy —

WILL | LIZ | THOMAS | HENRY II  
Mom — We need cash. Boatloads. | We spent our last treasury on Will’s codpiece. | I could make a fundraising flyer for Pizza Paunch? | Money is the root of all evil!

KATHY  
I’ll just write another check!

JOHN

PLACES! *Henry the Fourth* inside *Richard the Second*! Scene TWO!

**Scene Three — Puppet *Richard II*: The Musical (?)**

LIZ

(*At the audience*.) But what will they do?

WILL

They’re the chorus. They’re gonna sing.

RICHARD

I should sing — I’m a triple threat!

THOMAS | GEORGE

Why are we doing any of this? | I’m the glue and I don’t know what’s happening!

AUGUSTINE | WILL | HENRY II

To get ‘round the censors! | It’s a puppet show play within — | It’s *art*.

LIZ | RICHARD | THOMAS

Despite the break-up — We have changed eyes and we are with you, Will! | Will — Why are you always bringing in dumb comic moments? | What’s my puppet’s line?

AUGUSTINE | WILL

We’ll use *Richard the Second* — | We’ll use *Henry the Fourth* —

AUGUSTINE and WILL

WITHIN A MUSICAL!

RICHARD | AUGUSTINE | HENRY II | LIZ

(*At each other*.)You ruin *everything*!

AUGUSTINE | RICHARD

We can only afford to use a musical in the Public Domain! | Will ruins everything!

GEORGE

Will this need rigging? Can I re-use Richard’s hydraulic lifts from *Starlight Express*?

RICHARD

(*Singing*.) Starlight express — Starlight express — Are you real? Yes or no —

WILL

We’re not doing another night of Gilbert & Sullivan!

AUGUSTINE

Edwardian light operas are *all we can afford*!

RICHARD

(*Singing*.) Starlight express — Please answer me yes —

JOHN

I think I speak for everyone when I say that the *Mikado’s* racist overtones —

RICHARD | WILL

WE PERFORM ON ROLLERSKATES*! | Yeomen of the Guard* — Gah!

GEORGE

Cater-cousins now! My plan is working. Through these trials you’re learning to agree.

KATHY

In this episode Lady Elaine snaps and kills everyone! 14 puppets DIE ONSTAGE!

WILL

Mom! We need juice! (*Kathy exits*.) It’s chalked forth — (*Drawing on the whiteboard*.) We’ll use *Richard the Second* to tell *Henry the Fourth* within *The Pirates of Penzance* —

LIZ

But we only have two performers — You and Richard!

RICHARD

And as demonstrated — I have the pipes!

LIZ

So does Will! A great big —

WILL

Stop it!

THOMAS

I’d be willing to reprise my glory days *on the boards* —

RICHARD

These boards wouldn’t even be here if it weren’t for my dad!

LIZ

So, that’s Will, Richard and Thomas performing. John will play all the girls.

AUGUSTINE

That’s only four people! How can we have the Battle of Shrewsbury — or the Pirates’ lair? I mean, we need a cast of thousands!

WILL

That’s why we’ll use Big Puppets — who wear hand puppets — who have finger puppets — who do a play.

RICHARD

This is no way to honor my Really Great Dad!

THOMAS

The puppets carry puppets?

WILL

Who wear puppets —   
  
 JOHN

Are all my puppets girl puppets?

LIZ

And the puppets sing?

WILL

(*At the audience*.) No — They do. (*At audience member*.) It’s time for your solo.

AUGUSTINE

This can’t be done!

WILL

Between me, Richard, John and Thomas — That’s like — Four actors, four Big Puppets, eight hand puppets and 16 finger puppets. Is that enough?

LIZ

That’s a cast of 32!

WILL

For no money! Except for my mom’s —

RICHARD

I play all the puppet leads!

THOMAS

Who remembers me in *Cymbeline*?

JOHN

I’d like to open a discussion about gender norms —

HENRY II

We must wash ‘literature’ off ourselves!

LIZ

The name of our play will be “*Henry the Second, King of England: With the Death of Rosamond. A Tragedy. Acted at the East Cheap High School Drama Club, By Their Majesties Servants”*

RICHARD

We’re doing *Richard the Second*!   
  
 AUGUSTINE

Hidden in *Henry the Fourth* —   
  
 LIZ | AUGUSTINE

With *Henry the Second* | A *smoke screen for the censors —*

*LIZ*

Or — we could just have our sister killed?

THOMAS

I was thinking we could do *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*? I mean — I bring pizza to every meeting! I should be THE DIRECTOR!   
  
 AUGUSTINE

We will save SO MUCH MONEY by doing nine plays in one! Can you write it, Liz?

LIZ

We are the playwright!   
  
 RICHARD

Her reign is over! I’m — We are — Art — We art! — the ruler now!

LIZ

Snap your chaps — Richard! We are Queen!

RICHARD

Quit your caterwauling!

LIZ

Guards! — We need our light musket, not the big one, the caliver — It’s in our backpack.   
  
 THOMAS | GEORGE | RICHARD

Yes, my Queen — | Here it ‘tis — | Will’s mom! HELP!

LIZ

(*Pointing musket at RICHARD*.) We grow weary of this caitiff — Wrap him in cerements and shoot him! (*THOMAS and GEORGE shroud RICHARD and push him to his knees*.)

KATHY

(*Entering, super-pissed*.) In THIS EPISODE — There is NO MURDER unless I kill you!

RICHARD | WILL | AUGUSTINE

(*To LIZ*.) We are — I am — the chariest casing! Let me sing you a canton — (*Singing softly with voice wavering – to the tune of “Starlight Express”**.*) Come on, come on, come on, sir — give me your hand — Give me your hand — an early stirrer by the rood! | Mom! God — Why can’t you support me? | Did you sign a volunteer agreement?

GEORGE

This is nonsense! Unhand Richard! At least until the show is over — Or *starts*.

HENRY II

There is, of course, the possibility that this lost "Henry II" play is concerned not with Henry and Rosamond's love story, but with the conflict between court and church —

WILL | LIZ

Like I was saying — we should have puppets! (*To RICHARD*.) Rise and kiss your Queen. (*She offers RICHARD her hand*.)

RICHARD

(*Removing shroud as he stands*.) What is this flat, open country? This champain? Was that orange soda carded? My ire’s cashiered — No longer chafing with vile hatred. My Queen — I love thee! I am thy cautel!

WILL

This is awkward. Hello! I’m her *boyfriend*.

GEORGE

(*To audience*.) I’m so sorry — we’re on a wild goose chase.   
  
 LIZ

My campe resounds with fearefull shocks of war —

Yet in my breast the worser conflicts are!

GEORGE | HENRY II | JOHN

I don’t think this is producible. | We’re in hell! | ALL PLACES PUPPET HELL!

WILL

(*Makes his hands talk like puppets, uses high voice*)

My campe resounds with fearefull shocks of war

Yet in my breast the worser conflicts are...

THOMAS

That’s really effective, man.

WILL

(*Hands JOHN a girl puppet.)* Here, Frosh — You be Rosamond.   
  
 JOHN  
Why do I always have to be the girl?   
  
 RICHARD

You play the girls ‘til puberty —

PUPPET ROSAMOND (VOICED BY JOHN)

(*Holding PUPPET ROSAMOND like a limp churro*.) But sith your Grace in forraine coastes, among your foes unkind — Must go to hazard life and limme —   
  
 RICHARD

With feeling!

PUPPET ROSAMOND (VOICED BY JOHN)

Why should I stay behind? Nay rather let me like a Page your Shield and Target beare —   
  
 RICHARD | WILL | GEORGE | THOMAS

Now *our* turn! | I wanna read — | What show is? | Meat Lover’s Pizza!

PUPPET HENRY (VOICED BY RICHARD)

(*To PUPPET ROSAMOND*) "If't be my name that doth thee so offend —

WILL

We all agreed *I’d* play Puppet Henry!

RICHARD

Maybe next time —

PUPPET HENRY (VOICED BY RICHARD)

No more my selfe shall be mine owne names friend and predicts that *her* name will become a byword for hope and succor — with the very sweetnes of that name” —

GEORGE

Time out! Look at the audience!

HENRY II

We stopped caring about them an hour ago!   
  
 LIZ

(*To audience*.) Henry is at war in France! *We* hate the French! Shake the tambourine!

WILL

I may be fat and jolly — BUT I CAN PLAY HENRY!

RICHARD

My performance is well conceited!

AUGUSTINE | LIZ

Thou art conceited, Richard. | Thou art a comic sidekick, Will.

THOMAS and HENRY II and KATHY

I WILL DO ALL THE PUPPETS!

JOHN

I want to play a boy puppet for once!

LIZ

Richard — Tell us what’s on a Meat — Lover’s — *pizza*.

WILL

You choose Richard — The want-wit — over me! We’re *through*. And all of you! You’ve been making fun of me since — since — Leicester Middle School!   
  
 AUGUSTINE | LIZ | THOMAS | HENRY II | RICHARD

You’re talented! | A real wag! | Have some pizza. | Watch him tame — | I play Titus!

WILL

Why do you have to call me “Will, my Lord of Lester’s jesting player”?   
  
 KATHY

(*To audience*.) In this episode — the Blue Owl questions everything!  
  
 WILL

Shut up, Mom! I was heralded for my performance of *An Almond for a Parrot*!   
  
 AUGUSTINE | LIZ | THOMAS | HENRY II | RICHARD Will! | Cease this! | Mushrooms and olives — | Symbolist surrealism! | And your obesity!

WILL

I’m known for my "merriments" and my skills of improvisation!  
  
 GEORGE

THE STAGE MANAGER ARRIVES FIRST AND LEAVES LAST!

WILL

I’ve written *three* short comic plays — And two of those survived!

RICHARD

But you lack the chiseled jaw — the cool demeanor.   
  
 WILL

I should play a Henry — Just once!

GEORGE

And we should have a play! But WE CAN’T HAVE NICE THINGS!

HENRY II | AUGUSTINE | RICHARD

If I took all the money from the cash box in the office — | Will’s right! He should play Henry! | We play Titus! We play Henry! WE PLAY ALL THE PUPPET LEADS!

THOMAS | LIZ

Richard — Don’t make me fight you. | Richard — I want you to take Will’s codpiece.  
  
 JOHN

Can I be done now? This girl puppet is stupid — Like a limp churro!

AUGUSTINE | WILL | GEORGE

Let Will play Henry — | I’ll do a great job as Henry! | What are we even doing?

WILL AND GEORGE

I’m the *glue*! Without me — Your plays are unwatchable!

LIZ | KATHY

We art the glue! — We art the playwright! | (*To audience*.) In this episode — Everyone in the Land of Make-Believe drinks *cyanide*! First there are the Puppet Convulsions and then the going in and out of Puppet Consciousness — And then the Puppet Suffocation! Have you ever ridden your bike so hard that your legs began to burn and ache? Imagine that sensation spread across your entire puppet body! Then the *pain*! As puppet muscles contract — Searching for oxygen that never comes! THEN PUPPET DEATH!

HENRY II

(*To audience*.) They’re familiar with this sensation —

WILL

You always push me to the side — Say I’m the comic sidekick — Complain about my merriments and jigs — and jokes — But I’m the audience favorite!

RICHARD

You do bring sparkle.

WILL

I’m all sparkle! And spirit fingers! (*To audience*.) And isn’t that why you’re here? Not to *learn* — to get yelled at — but for a *break*! And I will bring it. I’ll bring my *A Game*! Finally! I’ll play the lead — In the play within a play within a play within a play, within a musical, within a puppet show — with puppets who wear puppets — who do a play!  
  
 RICHARD

Fine. Okay — Whatever! *Jesus*. HERE! (*Hands WILL PUPPET HENRY puppet*.)

LIZ

The new name of our play is “*Hotspur’s Lament, or, King Richard the Second as remembered on the battlefield of Henry the Fourth, the lost play of Henry the Second: With the Death of Rosamond and the defeat of the Rebels. A Musical Tragedy.”*

GEORGE | LIZ | RICHARD

Which part has puppets? | Musical Tragedy? Or Tragic Musical? | All about my dad!

KATHY

It says here in the by-laws that “in the event of death and usurpation and a great tumult — That a majority donation decides the season.”

WILL

Mom! We need more of those little easy-to-peel oranges and string cheese!

KATHY

(*To audience*.) In this episode, the Land of Make-Believe discusses patronage! Gus — How much did Richard’s dad donate last year compared to me?

AUGUSTINE

According to this spreadsheet — Will’s mom is in charge!

KATHY | HENRY II | GEORGE

Let Will play the leads! | Will’s mom — Can you peel this orange for me? | I’m the glue!

RICHARD | LIZ | GEORGE

Nepotism! | We’ll take windlasses to get out ahead of the censors. | The welkin darkens.

ALL

Hedgehogs! Sweet bodements!

AUGUSTINE

We’ll tell the lost story of *Henry the Second* within *Henry the Fourth* —

LIZ

And within that, a musical, of *Richard the Second* —   
  
 WILL

With puppets.

RICHARD

That’s about me, and my really Great Dad.

LIZ

This show will weather-fend!

WILL

Wafter the vulgars! (*Spitting in his hand*.) Void your rheum! (*They all spit*.) Prepare your vizards! It’s Show Time!

Scene Four — Ghosts and a Play (Finally.)

*During this scene, we hear George Benson’s “On Broadway” in the background. In fact, the whole scene shouldn’t be longer than the 5-minute song. Please God.*

*KATHY*

(*To audience*.)In this episode King Friday is a theater director and choreographer trying to balance work on his latest Broadway musical with editing a Hollywood film he —

JOHN

London. KING RICHARD II's palace.

WILL

Mom! Where’s the King Richard the Second Puppet? We can’t find it!

KATHY

I’ll just put this little white cape with the spot on it on the Henry puppet and this pageboy wig and this big crown. And I have a Sharpie to draw a mustache — There!

GEORGE

Enter KING RICHARD II, JOHN OF GAUNT, with other Nobles and Attendants —

PUPPET HENRY AS PUPPET RICHARD II (VOICED BY WILL)

Old John of Gaunt! Time-honored Lancaster!

JOHN

Hang on a minute! I have to turn Puppet Rosamond into Puppet John of Gaunt!

PUPPET HENRY AS PUPPET RICHARD II (VOICED BY WILL)

Hast thou, according to thy oath and band —

AUGUSTINE

Wait! Who’s directing?

RICHARD and WILL and KATHY

I am!

HENRY II

Can we wait on rehearsal? I have an ortho appointment. My mom just texted —

PUPPET ROSAMOND AS JOHN OF GAUNT (VOICED BY JOHN) | KATHY

Liz promised us all Frappuccinos! | Blue Owl is workaholic who chain-smokes!

GEORGE

I can’t do caffeine this late in the day — And this is a *performance*. See?

RICHARD | WILL

I don’t do dairy when I’m acting — | Don’t leave me hanging! This is a two-man puppet!

JOHN and AUGUSTINE and LIZ and KATHY and GEORGE

Two-*person* puppet!

RICHARD

I have to protect my instrument — (*Trying to grab back PUPPET RICHARD II*)But if you got me a pumpkin spice Frappuccino — I would descend on it —

WILL | HENRY II | RICHARD | KATHY

Be careful! He’s made of foam! My mom made him! | Pumpkin Spice is part of the zeitgeist. | (*Taking up his side of PUPPET JOHN OF GAUNT*) Sorry, Will — | Blue Owl needs his daily dose of Vivaldi, Visine, Alka-Seltzer, Dexedrine and sex!

WILL |THOMAS | JOHN | AUGUSTINE

Mom? | Where were we? (*Squeaking*.) I have my liege! | It’s not pumpkin spice season!

WILL | AUGUSTINE | GEORGE

I make the puppet talk! — You move his arm! | I’m going to pass around this paper — For everybody’s drink order. | ACT I, SCENE I. London. KING RICHARD’s palace

THOMAS | GEORGE

We’re right at the place where nothing’s happened — | I’ll be watching for technical issues. Anything phantasmagoric —

LIZ | AUGUSTINE

This part’s pretty straightforward — | Are you good, Henry? Ready to Dramaturg?

HENRY II | GEORGE

I brought my mechanical pencil *and* my headlamp. | Where’d you get that lantern?

AUGUSTINE

Now remember — It’s not 1599. We’re not in East Cheap High School —

LIZ

Richard the Second came to the throne as a boy of ten —

AUGUSTINE

We need 14th century Puppet realism —

WILL and RICHARD and THOMAS

I’m directing this! I play the *leads*.

JOHN

Maybe I should play Richard? — I was ten four years ago.

KATHY

And it’s terrifying to imagine that you’ll be driving soon —

THOMAS | KATHY

I was the Pizza Paunch Drive of the Month! I could play him — | (To audience.) Blue Owl’s girlfriend and ex-wife and daughter try to pull him back from the brink but it’s TOO LATE FOR HIS STRESS-RAVAGED HEART.

WILL | RICHARD

We don’t need a driver — We need a Boy King! | Blue Owl is like a Steam Train —

GEORGE

(*Writing*.) The drink I want is off menu — It’s a cotton candy frap — That’s vanilla bean crème, blended with raspberry syrup, topped with — Just ask for it.

RICHARD | AUGUSTINE

(Singing.) Woo woo! Woo woo! Nobody can do it like a steam train. | Let’s do this!

PUPPET JOHN OF GAUNT (VOICED BY JOHN *AND* RICHARD)

(*Squeaking*.) For once we agree!

RICHARD | JOHN

You do his arm — I’ll say his lines! | You do his arm! I WANT TO SAY HIS LINES!

LIZ

Richard comes to power at a time when the war is turning against the French and —

WILL

Liz, no one cares! (*To audience*.) Look at them —

GEORGE

They care — I mean — The red flag was raised this morning. Red for history.

RICHARD | LIZ

(*Singing*.) Nobody can do it like a steam train. | Black olives and mushrooms — Meat.

HENRY II

RED FOR BLOOD!

RICHARD

(*Moving in close to LIZ*.) Call me Rusty.

AUGUSTINE

Let’s just do the script! — George! Go get it out of the chicken coop!

GEORGE

You should all be off book! THIS IS A PERFORMANCE!

RICHARD

As long as my hair’s in place, I don’t care what I say. That’s *acting*.

AUGUSTINE

(*Calculating on her phone*.) Okay, the Frappuccinos come to $31.60. Liz?

LIZ | AUGUSTINE

We art out of cash. | We can’t pay for frothy beverages from Club Funds.

GEORGE

I need a Trenta — It’s the biggest available.

WILL

Dude, even I don’t need a Trenta — That’s, like a half gallon.

JOHN

What is a ‘gallon’?

HENRY II

The standard measure of capacity is the Saxon bushel? — Research, people!

GEORGE

I’ve got the puppet set measured out in barleycorn. Three barleycorns — serve as the basis of an *inch*.

JOHN

What is an inch?

GEORGE

Of course, barleycorns can be converted into poppy seeds, as another system of measurement — But it’s really hard to build something in a gymnasium at that scale.

PUPPET JOHN OF GAUNT (Voiced by JOHN with RICHARD pouting.)

Be it remembered that the iron yard of our Lord the King containeth 3 feet and no more!

RICHARD | LIZ | THOMAS

My father was a great man! We are here to honor him! | Failed attempts to broker peace with France — I could order another pizza — I get a discount!

LIZ

As a result of the political and military actions of the magnates — the Lords Appellant — some of Richard's closest friends and advisors are executed or exiled.

WILL | LIZ

Puppet exile? Sweet! | Richard declares himself to be of age —

AUGUSTINE

Like Richard declared himself director of this club!

LIZ

Richard tries to influence the direction of government —

RICHARD

I did want to talk to you all about Club Dues — That you can pay me.

LIZ | JOHN

Richard the Second is maintained as a figurehead with no real power — | You have to hold the puppet’s arm up, Richard! Otherwise it breaks the illusion!

RICHARD | WILL

Puppets are heavy! — Whose idea was this? | (*Receives note*.) Look — A note!

RICHARD

(*To audience*.) I don’t remember opening up this rehearsal to feedback?

GEORGE

You’re supposed to be staging *a puppet play*! Right now!

PUPPET JOHN OF GAUNT (Voiced by JOHN)

The note says, “I see where you’re going with this, wonderful, really wonderful. But stop, and don’t ever do it again.” (*To audience*.) Which one of you said this?

LIZ

1397 — Richard attacks the Lords Appellants who had prevailed ten years earlier —

PUPPET RICHARD II (VOICED BY WILL)

Not okay! (*Receives another note*.) “I don’t know what I want, but this is not it.”

KATHY | GEORGE

(*Handing him a box of smaller puppets made from P.E. stuff*.) The glue’s still drying on the hand puppet army | Did you use my glue? Because that’s *mine*.

WILL

(*Rifling through the with his non-puppet arm*.) Thomas of Woodstock —

LIZ

Yeah — He’s murdered —

WILL

Richard Fitzalan, earl of Arundel —

RICHARD

Wait, another Richard?

WILL

Richard the third —

LIZ

Executed on Tower Hill. Beheaded.

AUGUSTINE

Are we really going to execute hand puppets?

WILL

(*Throwing hand puppets to THOMAS, RICHARD and JOHN*.) Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, and Thomas Arundel, archbishop of Canterbury —

LIZ

Exiled. (*Receives another note*.) “Never mind. Don’t do this. It is a bad idea.”

WILL

(*At the audience*.) How ‘bout we exile you, puppets? (*To LIZ*.) Where do they go?

LIZ

They go to France! Can you *imagine*?

**Scene Five — Derailment. The playwright gives up.**

WILL

(*Pulling the last two remaining hand puppets out of the box*.) Henry of Bolingbroke, duke of Hereford — the future Henry IV — Thomas Mowbray, duke of Norfolk, accused each other of treason — (*Receives another note*.) This is breaking my flow! (*Looks at it*.) I can’t — Here, you read it. (*Hands note to PUPPET RICHARD II* — *That he’s holding*.)   
  
 RICHARD | WILL

As ‘Me’ Richard or Puppet Richard? (*To audience.*) Ungrateful! I am officially disinviting you all from Dungeons & Dragons club! (*Tears up D&D flyer*.)

PUPPET RICHARD II (VOICED BY WILL)

(*Reading note*.) “Go on and try things — I’ll just keep shooting them down!” —   
  
 RICHARD | LIZ | GEORGE

That’s just mean! | Our play begins! | My one desire!

HENRY II

We need tent poles! We need structure! THIS PLAY IS A LIMP CHURRO!

PUPPET RICHARD II (VOICED BY WILL)

Forget, forgive, conclude and be agreed — Our doctors say this is no time to bleed —

*HAND PUPPET LORD APPELLANTS react with puppet anger.*

PUPPET RICHARD II (VOICED BY WILL)

Why uncle, thou hast many years to live.  
Gaunt: But not a minute, king, that thou canst give.

PUPPET JOHN OF GAUNT (VOICED BY JOHN)  
This royal throne of kings, this sceptered isle,   
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars —   
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.  
Landlord of England art thou and not king.

RICHARD

No! I am King — We settled this! I have a cape! See? *My mom made it*.   
  
 PUPPET RICHARD II (VOICED BY WILL)

The ripest fruit first falls!

THOMAS  
Who’s going to play Henry Bolingbroke?   
  
 WILL   
You got this, big guy!

THOMAS

Really?

HAND PUPPET HENRY BOLINGBOOK (Voiced by THOMAS)  
Come, lords, away.   
To fight with Glendower and his complices — A while to work and after holiday.

LIZ

See — This is good foreshadowing. Henry Bolingbrook is Henry the IV.

WILL

What? I didn’t realize that! — I should play him!

PUPPET RICHARD II (VOICED BY WILL)

(*Receives note*.) Another note! (*He looks at the AUDIENCE* *scornfully*.) Not all the water in the rough rude sea — Can wash the balm from an anointed king! (*Gives note to WILL*.)

WILL

What’s it say? Give it here — “What is this? What the hell is this?” Okay —

RICHARD

Wait! Is it cool for you to talk to Puppet Richard? You’re a person and he’s a character?

HENRY II | KATHY

I think there’s precedent — Kathy? | It’s fine! It’s accepted! Puppets don’t have feet!

GEORGE

Nothing in this play makes sense. Just tell me when to turn the lights off.

WILL | AUGUSTINE | JOHN

We don’t have “lights” — | We can’t afford them! | It just gets *dark out*.

GEORGE | HENRY II

Then blot out the sun — | THOU MURDEREST THEATER!

PUPPET RICHARD II (VOICED BY WILL)

For heaven’s sake let us sit upon the ground — And tell sad stories of the death of kings.  
  
 HAND PUPPET HENRY BOLINGBROOK (VOICED BY THOMAS)   
See, see, King Richard doth himself appear — As doth the blushing discontented sun —   
From out the fiery portal of the east!

PUPPET RICHARD II (VOICED BY WILL)

What must the king do now? Must he submit?

WILL | HENRY II

Henry II — You be the Duke of York — | Really? Okay!

HAND PUPPET DUKE OF YORK (Voiced by HENRY II.)   
Great Duke of Lancaster, I come to thee  — From plume-plucked Richard, who with willing soul — Adopts thee heir!

LIZ

In this episode, Richard’s most trusted advisors — His uncle — But when Richard’s tossed off the throne and replaced by King Henry, he switches teams.

JOHN

What is a ‘team’?   
  
 PUPPET RICHARD II (VOICED BY WILL)

With mine own tears I wash away my balm,

With mine own hands I give away my crown.

HENRY II

I have so many questions —

GEORGE

It’s easy, son — The drinks will all have our names on them. Mine will be the big one.

WILL

(*Receiving another note*.) “Smell the gloom” What? What even is that?   
  
 HAND PUPPET HENRY BOLINGBROOK (VOICED BY THOMAS)

The shadow of your sorrow hath destroyed — The shadow of your face!

WILL

Your face, Richard! Stupid Chicken Dum-Dum!

RICHARD | GEORGE

You’re just jealous of my heroism! | Leave chickens out of this!

PUPPET RICHARD II  
I wasted time, and now doth time waste me!  
  
 PUPPET EXTON (VOICED BY KATHY.)  
For now the devil that told me I did well —

WILL | RICHARD | LIZ

Who is this guy? | He seems *unimportant.* | Exton’s only in a few scenes at the end —

HENRY II

THANK GOD WE’RE NEAR THE END!

RICHARD

How does this play honor My Dad — The Great joiner of —

*HAND PUPPET EXTON murders PUPPET KING RICHARD II. Stage effect: Blood on his little hands!*

HAND PUPPET EXTON (VOICED BY KATHY)   
Though I did wish him dead,  
I hate the murderer, love him murdered!  
The guilt of conscience take thou for thy labour,  
But neither my good word nor princely favour:  
With Cain go wander through shades of night,  
And never show thy head by day nor light.

WILL

Thanks, Mom.

KATHY

(*Putting a tiny crown on HAND PUPPET HENRY BOLLINGBROOK.)* I made you this!

HAND PUPPET KING HENRY IV (Voiced by THOMAS.)

Though I did wish him dead —

WILL

I play the lead! Right, mom? Give me that!

HAND PUPPET KING HENRY IV (Voiced by WILL)

I hate the murd’rer, love him murdered!

THOMAS

Does anyone besides me think it’s weird that Henry refuses to acknowledge that he’s the one who causes Richard’s death?

HENRY II | HAND PUPPET KING HENRY IV (VOICED BY WILL)

That’s how Liz wrote it! | I'll make a voyage to the Holy Land!

HAND PUPPET KING HENRY IV (VOICED BY WILL)

To wash this blood off from my guilty tiny puppet hand!

GEORGE

There’s a basketball game in the gym in ten minutes.

AUGUSTINE | JOHN

We have to keep going — Text your moms! | TEN MINUTES BASKETBALL!

LIZ | GEORGE | WILL | RICHARD

My mom is dead — | Ten minutes! | For *Henry the Fourth*? | For *Starlight Express*?

KATHY

In this Very Special Episode — The Land of Make-Believe Gets their shit together!

LIZ | WILL | AUGUSTINE | GEORGE

Plenty of time! | I was born to greatness! | I need caffeine! | Nine minutes basketball!

WILL

My thoughts are whirled like a potter's wheel — I know not where I am, nor what I do!

GEORGE

Wait! I’m just concerned — I have an overall question about scale!

WILL

What’s the problem?!

GEORGE

We made these big puppets but now Henry the fourth is a hand puppet so what do we do with the big ones now? And why are we using puppets in the first place?

AUGUSTINE | GEORGE | KATHY | HENRY II

To save money! Actors are *expensive*. | But we’re in High School! We work for *free*. | Puppets don’t have feet! | It’s theater magic, George!

THOMAS

In this play, Henry’s King, and his son’s a disappointment —

JOHN

Oh — Can I play Prince Henry?

HENRY II

Maybe I should? I haven’t gotten to play a Henry and I *am* a Henry —

AUGUSTINE | RICHARD | WILL

You can’t have *fun* — You’re the dramaturg! | Some are born to play the lead and — | Some just play mute corpses.

*RICHARD seizes PUPPET HENRY IV.*

PUPPET HENRY IV (Voiced by RICHARD.)

Which fourteen hundred years ago were nailed  
For our advantage on the bitter cross —

Scene Six — Falstaff Riseth

LIZ

And we need a Falstaff. Here — Use this basketball.

HAND PUPPET PRINCE HENRY (VOICED BY GUS)

(*At BASKEBALL FALSTAFF*.) Thou art so fat-witted with drinking of old sack and unbuttoning thee after supper and sleeping upon benches in the afternoon, that thou hast forgotten to demand that truly which thou wouldst truly know.

WILL

I have a problem with him being represented this —

BASKETBALL FALSTAFF (VOICED BY WILL.)

Let us be Diana’s foresters, gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon!

LIZ

They’re conspiring — But it’s all an act. He’s trying to seem like the bad seed, so his —

HAND PUPPET PRINCE HENRY (VOICED BY GUS)

Yet herein will I imitate the sun,  
Who doth permit the base contagious clouds  
To smother up his beauty from the world.

LIZ

Okay — So here’s where it gets interesting. The Lord Appelants are pissed about what happened, how Richard treated them in the last play, so —

KATHY

I’m making tiny fucking capes as fast as I can!

HAND PUPPET DUKE OF YORK AS HOTSPUR (VOICED BY HENRY II.)

By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap,  
To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon,  
Or dive into the bottom of the deep,  
Where fathom-line could never touch the ground,  
And pluck up drowned honour by the locks.

HAND PUPPET PRINCE HENRY (VOICED BY GUS)

It would be argument for a week, laughter for a month, and a good jest for *ever*.

BASKETBALL FALSTAFF

There lives not three good men unhanged in England,

and one of them is fat and grows old.

HAND PUPPET PRINCE HENRY (VOICED BY GUS)

(*At BASKETBALL FALSTAFF*) That trunk of humours, that bolting-hutch of beastliness, that swollen parcel of dropsies, that huge bombard of sack, that stuffed cloak-bag of guts, that roasted Manningtree ox with the pudding in his belly, that reverend Vice, that grey Iniquity, that father Ruffian, that Vanity in years?

BASKETBALL FALSTAFF

Banish plump Jack, and banish all the world.

HAND PUPPET PRINCE HENRY

I do, I will.

RICHARD

I just — What is going on? This play is *stupid*!

HAND PUPPET DUKE OF YORK AS HOTSPUR (VOICED BY HENRY II.)

While you live, tell truth and shame the devil!

PUPPET KING HENRY IV (VOICED BY THOMAS)

He was but as the cuckoo is in June,  
Heard, not regarded.

HAND PUPPET DUKE OF YORK AS HOTSPUR (VOICED BY HENRY II.)

This sickness doth infect  
The very life-blood of our enterprise!  
  
 AUGUSTINE

Oh my god — How will we sell tickets?

BASKETBALL FALSTAFF

Food for powder, food for powder. They’ll fill a pit as well as better.

LIZ

We’re getting ready for a big battle —

GEORGE

We don’t have enough puppets!

WILL

Be creative, George! *Lean in*! Each hand puppet can have two finger puppets — Plus all our extra fingers! How many finger puppets is that?

*The company enacts the Battle of Shrewsbury with improvisation, and a great tumult of finger puppets.*

AUGUSTINE

Stop! What are we even doing?

*The lights go to black suddenly. All react. Then take out their phones, illuminating BASKETBALL FALSTAFF.*

BASKETBALL FALSTAFF

Can Honour set to a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honour hath no skill in surgery then? No. What is Honour? A word. What is that word ‘honour’? *Air*.

*Lights up.*

GEORGE

Well that was *—*

HAND PUPPET DUKE OF YORK AS HOTSPUR (VOICED BY HENRY II.)

O, Harry, thou hast robbed me of my youth!

HAND PUPPET PRINCE HENRY (VOICED BY GUS)

Line!

LIZ

Thy ignominy?

HAND PUPPET PRINCE HENRY (VOICED BY GUS)

Thank you, line!

GEORGE

I’m supposed to feed people lines —

JOHN

I thought I was?

AUGUSTINE

Oh my god — You’re all supposed to be off book!

WILL

We don’t have a script!

HAND PUPPET PRINCE HENRY (VOICED BY GUS)

Thy ignominy sleep with thee in the grave — What?

LIZ | RICHARD  
But not remembered in thy epitaph! | Congratulations, everyone! This play is *terrible*.

*Exeunt puppets.*

Scene Seven — Piracy

GEORGE

We didn’t even get to the musical!

LIZ

I’m just writing it —   
  
 WILL

On the coast of Cornwall — a gang of pirates party —

LIZ

Frederic — a pirate apprentice — reminds the pirate king that his obligation to the gang is soon over.

THOMAS

Who is *Frederic*?

LIZ | WILL

He’s 21 — | It’s his *birthday* —

LIZ

Right! Let’s say he was apprenticed to the pirates only until his twenty-first birthday, which is that day, today — and he’s leaving them.

GEORGE | KATHY

Now we need tiny eye patches and peg legs, don’t we? | Fuckers.

WILL

Pirate puppets!

AUGUSTINE

According to this Excel sheet the cost of doing all this with puppets far exceeds any funds we’ll recoup from doing an entire season in one show — Even a stupid one!

GEORGE | WILL | HENRY II | PUPPET RICHARD II/FREDERIC (Voiced by JOHN)

Well, do you want Richard the Second as Henry the Fourth to play Frederic? | I think Falstaff the Basketball should play the Major General — | Pirates of Penzance — Act One — | (*Entering, wearing puppet pirate costume*.) Yes, I have done my best for you —

KATHY

Wait! I have a little itty-bitty wig for him. Here.

PUPPET RICHARD THE SECOND as FREDERIC (VOICED BY JOHN)

And why? It was my duty under my indentures, and I am the slave of duty.

WILL | RICHARD

This doesn’t work! | Who will play the Pirate King? |

LIZ | RICHARD  
We’ll double cast it — | A King should play a King!

JOHN | LIZ

Couldn’t a woman play the Pirate King? | I like how you took charge —

GEORGE

I hear dribbling — They’re coming! The basketball team is coming here!

PUPPET JOHN OF GAUNT AS THE PIRATE KING (VOICED BY GUS)

Well, Frederic, if you conscientiously feel that it is your duty to destroy us, we cannot blame you for acting on that conviction.

PUPPET PRINCE HENRY AS PUPPET SAMUEL (VOICED BY KATHY.)

But, hang it all! you wouldn't have us absolutely merciless?

HENRY II

I would like to offer to play the second in command to the Pirate King because I have the right vocal range — Vocal Range – B flat to E!

LIZ and WILL

You’re the dramaturg!

PUPPET JOHN OF GAUNT AS THE PIRATE KING (VOICED BY GUS)

There's my difficulty; until twelve o'clock I would, after twelve I wouldn't. Was ever a man placed in so delicate a situation?

(*Singing*)

Under the brave black flag I fly,

Than play a sanctimonious part

With a pirate head and a pirate heart —

WILL

How do you know these lyrics?

LIZ

He complains about Ruth — A pirate maid-of-all-work and Frederic’s nursery maid —

KATHY

(*To audience*.) In this episode Ruth is in love with Frederic and feels betrayed when he falls in love with Mabel!

ALL PUPPETS

Who’s Mabel?!

PUPPET JOHN OF GAUNT AS THE PIRATE KING (VOICED BY GUS) (*Singing*) For I am a Pirate King! And it is, it is a glorious thing — To be a Pirate King!

WILL | LIZ | RICHARD

(*To audience*.) That’s your part! | We are bored of writing. | Do you like trains?

PUPPET RICHARD II as FREDERIC (VOICED BY JOHN)

Ruth, tell me candidly and without reserve: compared with other women, how are you?

AUGUSTINE AS RUTH | LIZ | PUPPET RICHARD II as FREDERIC

I have a cold, but otherwise I am quite well — | *Big* trains? | You have deceived me!

WILL  
Can we please just skip to the song?

HENRY II

But for the logical flow the audience needs more exposition —

PUPPET RICHARD THE SECOND as FREDERIC (VOICED BY JOHN)

(*Singing*) Oh, is there not one maiden breast

Oh, is there not one maiden here

Whose homely face and bad complexion —

AUGUSTINE | WILL | THOMAS

Just hang on — | Can we skip the song altogether? | Monsters! Did you see that?

PUPPET PRINCE HENRY AS PUPPET SAMUEL (VOICED BY LIZ)

We'd better pause, or danger may befall-

His father is a Major-General!

RICHARD and PUPPET RICHARD II (VOICED BY JOHN)

Yes, yes, he is a Major-General!

*The Major-General appears — Played by*

*FALSTAFF THE BASKETBALL. (He has glasses and a white mustache.)*

BASKETBALL FALSTAFF AS MAJOR-GENERAL (VOICED BY WILL)

(*Singing*.) Yes, yes, I am the Major-General!

(*Singing doubletime*.) I am the very model of a modern Major-General

I know our mythic history, King Arthur's and Sir Caradoc's;

I answer hard acrostics, I've a pretty taste for paradox,

I quote in elegiacs all the crimes of Heliogabalus,

In conics I can floor peculiarities parabolous —

ALL

(*Singing*.) He is the very model of the modern major general!

BASKETBALL FALSTAFF AS MAJOR-GENERAL (VOICED BY WILL)

And now that I've introduced myself, I should like to have some idea of what's going on!

PUPPET ROSAMOND AS PUPPET JOHN OF GAUNT AS PUPPET RUTH

(VOICED BY RICHARD)

Oh, Papa — we —

WILL

You do know this is a basketball, right?

PUPPET PRINCE HENRY AS PUPPET SAMUEL (VOICED BY LIZ)

Permit me, I'll explain in two words: we propose to marry your daughters.

BASKETBALL FALSTAFF AS MAJOR-GENERAL (VOICED BY WILL)

But wait a bit. I object to pirates as sons-in-law.

PUPPET ROSAMOND AS JOHN OF GAUNT AS THE PIRATE KING

(VOICED BY JOHN)

We object to major-generals as fathers-in-law!

HENRY II | JOHN

Act Two! | ACT TWO PLACES!

LIZ

We need a Mabel.

AUGUSTINE

Major-General Baskeball’s youngest ward — She falls in love with Frederic.

HANDPUPPET DUKE OF YORK AS HOTSPUR AS MABEL

(VOICED BY HENRY II)

(*Singing*) Go, ye heroes, go to glory — Though you die in combat gory!

HENRY II | GEORGE | KATHY

Wait! She needs long hair! | Kathy? Do you have that little wig ready yet? | Die bitch!

HANDPUPPET DUKE OF YORK AS HOTSPUR AS MABEL

(VOICED BY HENRY II)

Ye shall live in song and story. Go to immortality!

Go to death, and go to slaughter;

Die, and every Cornish daughter —

LIZ

I speak Cornish! One might say this play’s a perplexity, a bother — A crum-a-grackle!

HANDPUPPET DUKE OF YORK AS HOTSPUR AS MABEL

(VOICED BY HENRY II)

With her tears your grave shall water.

Go, ye heroes, go and die!

PUPPET RICHARD II as FREDERIC (VOICED BY JOHN) | PUPPET JOHN OF GAUNT AS THE PIRATE KING (VOICED BY JOHN) | AUGUSTINE AS RUTH

You don't mean to say you are going to hold me to that? | No, we merely remind you of the fact, and leave the rest to your sense of duty. |Your sense of duty!

PUPPET RICHARD II as FREDERIC (VOICED BY JOHN)

As I was merciful to you just now, be merciful to me!

HENRY II

Let’s be merciful *to the audience*!

HANDPUPPET DUKE OF YORK AS HOTSPUR AS MABEL

(VOICED BY HENRY II)

(*Singing*) Stay, Fred'ric, stay! They have no legal claim — No shadow of a shame — Will fall upon thy name —

PUPPET RICHARD II as FREDERIC (VOICED BY JOHN)

(*Singing*) Nay, Mabel, nay! To-night I quit these walls — The thought my soul appalls,

But when stern Duty calls — I must obey.

HANDPUPPET DUKE OF YORK AS HOTSPUR AS MABEL

(VOICED BY HENRY II)

Sergeant, approach! Young Frederic was to have led you to death and glory.

LIZ

Who will play the policeman?

KATHY

Little hat — Little billy club — Okay, go —

PUPPET PRINCE HENRY AS PUPPET SAMUEL SEARGANT (VOICED BY LIZ)

He has acted shamefully!

HANDPUPPET DUKE OF YORK AS HOTSPUR AS MABEL

(VOICED BY HENRY II)

You know nothing about it. He has acted nobly.

PUPPET PRINCE HENRY AS PUPPET SAMUEL SEARGANT (VOICED BY LIZ)

This is perplexing.

WILL

We cannot understand it at all.

PUPPET PRINCE HENRY AS PUPPET SAMUEL SEARGANT (VOICED BY LIZ)

Our course is clear —

KATHY

WE ALL DRINK CYANIDE!

PUPPET JOHN OF GAUNT AS PIRATE KING (VOICED BY JOHN) |

PUPPET RICHARD II as HENRY IV (VOICED BY WILL)

You work upon our feelings! | Revenge is sweet — And flavours all our dealings!

PUPPET ROSAMOND AS JOHN OF GAUNT AS THE PIRATE KING

(VOICED BY JOHN)

With courage rare — And resolution manly —

PUPPET RICHARD II as HENRY IV (VOICED BY WILL)

For death prepare,

Unhappy Gen'ral Basketball —

*PUPPET RICHARD II stabs BASKETBALL FALSTAFF — Great tumult.*

PUPPET PRINCE HENRY AS PUPPET SAMUEL SEARGANT (VOICED BY LIZ)

To gain a brief advantage you've contrived!

PUPPET JOHN OF GAUNT AS THE PIRATE KING (VOICED BY GUS)

We know that game!

BASKETBALL FALSTAFF (VOICED BY WILL)

(*Dying*.) On your allegiance, we've a stronger claim.

We charge you yield, we charge you yield — (*He dies — Deflates*?)

KATHY

(*To audience*.) Now we all drink our cyanide.

*PIRATE PUPPETS kneel, SEARGENT stands over them.*

PUPPET JOHN OF GAUNT AS THE PIRATE KING (VOICED BY GUS)

We yield at once, with humbled mien,

Because, with all our faults, we love our Queen!

HANDPUPPET DUKE OF YORK AS HOTSPUR AS MABEL (HENRY II)

Poor wandering ones!

WILL

(*To the audience*.) We’re at that point in our meeting when —

THOMAS | GEORGE

(*To audience*.) Nothing makes sense. | (*To audience*.) *This* was the play!

AUGUSTINE | LIZ

It’s just in our invention — | Our risk-taking!

HENRY II

School’s so boring. You sit and sit all day and then there’s homework?

JOHN

Why do we learn proofs and theorems? What good are they?

WILL | RICHARD

With our good nature — | Hopefully you take us with you.

THOMAS

Keep us — Carry our humble — Stupid story —

GEORGE

Carry it like a lantern —

WILL

You don’t have to rent.

Epilogue — Thanks for hanging in.

GEORGE

We’re in another part of the wood —

JOHN

A church!

HENRY II

A room in a home —

WILL

(*Holding LIZ’s hands, staring at RICHARD)* ‘Tis one of the best discretions as I ever I did look upon!

RICHARD and LIZ

Huh?

GEORGE

You come hither, my lord, to marry this lady?

WILL

Marry her? No! (*Drops LIZ’s hands*) But I do like him —

RICHARD

(*To WILL*.) What’s your will?

WILL

(*To RICHARD*.) Wilt thou hear some music — My sweet love?

RICHARD

I rather will suspect the sun with cold —

LIZ

Fetch thee new nuts!

RICHARD

But come to marry her — Or at least be her boyfriend!

LIZ

Hateful fool! Thou art *our* boyfriend!

WILL

(*To RICHARD*.) Be not extreme in submission!

RICHARD

(*To WILL*.) How I love thee!

WILL

(*To RICHARD*.) How I dote —

AUGUSTINE

(*Moving in close to GEORGE*.) She shall have no desires!

GEORGE

(*To AUGUSTINE*.) None — my lady! I never thought you were bossy.

JOHN

(*To HENRY II*.) Not knowing what — or when or how! Just — Places!

HENRY II

(*To JOHN*.) Thank you, places! Sweet love! Let’s abandon all sense — Together!

RICHARD

(*To WILL*.) You learn me noble thankfulness.

LIZ

(*To WILL*.) Take us back again!

WILL

My heart is claimed!

GEORGE

(*To AUGUSTINE*.) So think I too —

KATHY

(*To THOMAS*.) See’st thou this sweet sight?

THOMAS

Will’s mom — I see that same dew!

RICHARD

(*To WILL*.) What visions! So much chest hair.

GEORGE

(*To AUGUSTINE*.) I have keys to this entire building.

THOMAS

But what of this? Of *me*?

LIZ

What shall be done with him? (*To THOMAS*.) With *us*?!

THOMAS

(*To LIZ*.) What is your plot?

KATHY

I brought the macaroni salad to teacher appreciation week, okay? I’m sorry! I killed your drama teacher! I didn’t mean to!

LIZ

At about this time there’s a case of mistaken identity — Separated twins — A potion rubbed in the eyes — A woman dressed in men’s pants — Disguised!   
  
 AUGUSTINE

I’m a girl!

GEORGE

(*To AUGUSTINE*.) And I love you!

JOHN

As am I!

HENRY II

(*To JOHN*.) Do you like Dungeons & Dragons?

KATHY

Pants or skirt — Same dew!

Basketball Falstaff

(*Moving in close to PUPPET MISTRESS FORD played by PUPPET ROSAMOND*.) She and I are newly met —

WILL

(*To THOMAS regarding LIZ*.) There lies your love.

THOMAS

Music, ho! music, such as charmeth sleep! (*He moves in close to LIZ*.)

[Music, still]

LIZ

Attend and mark — You’re my *brother*. (*THOMAS recoils*.) And by birthright the King!

LIZ takes off crown and gives it to THOMAS.

ALL

(*Bowing, to THOMAS*.) Long live the King!

THOMAS

(*Taking LIZ’s crown*.) All Wedded — Or at least *consenting to be friends*. All in jollity!

WILL

My queen — In silence sad?

LIZ

So — sacred path —

[Horns winded within]

THOMAS

She's but the sign and semblance of her honor.

All except WILL bow to LIZ.

WILL

I never tempted her with word too large —

THOMAS returns the crown to LIZ and bows.

THOMAS

Thou art queen.

LIZ

Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?

WILL

Answer truly — to your name alone.

LIZ

(*To WILL*.) Forester — (*To the AUDIENCE*.) Our flight! One mutual cry —

WILL

Half sleep —

RICHARD

Half waking —

LIZ

Mine own — And not mine own.

WILL

To England!

ALL

Heigh-Ho!

LIZ

To England!

WILL

And to her Queen!

LIZ

Thus — we commend us to your constant faith, and your selves to your best fortunes!

WILL

And now some dancing!

*Drums and pipes and dancing.*

*End of play.*