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**Dramatic
Publishing**

As She Likes It

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Written by

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As She Likes It premiered at Gamut Theatre in Harrisburg, Pa., on August 12, 2016, as part of their Stage Door Series.

CAST

Prologue..... Company

The Shrew Must Go On

Melanie Gold.....Fran Bixby

Katherine..... Ellie Goldenberg

Harry Amber Wagner Mann

A Woman's Battle

Cassandra Margaret Morris

Cressida..... Gabriella DeCarli

Andromache..... Sharia Benn

Helen Heather Marie Massie

Hecuba Sharyn Peterson

Another Conversation

Ophelia..... Anna Walker Roberts

Gertrude Tara Herweg

Beatriz ... If You Speak of Love

Beatriz..... Amanda Lynette Vazquez

Yolanda Aleax Olivera

The Lear Sisters

Claudia Emily Joyce

Reenie..... Anna Walker Roberts

Gordy Heather Marie Massie

Dance Julia Hoffman,
Maura Elizabeth McErlean,
Amanda Lynette Vazquez

Haircuts

Anne..... Ellie Goldenberg

Isabella Amber Wagner Mann

The Nurse's Rebellion

Juliet	Gabriella DeCarli
Nurse	Kelli Kauterman
Lady Capulet	Windy Alford
Shakespeare.....	Karen Ruch

PRODUCTION

Director	Karen Ruch
Stage Manager	Kate Gibson
Choreographer.....	Della M. Cowall
Lighting Design	Karen Gasser
Costume Design.....	Karen Ruch

We dedicate this anthology to the memory of our beloved Ellie Goldenberg, whose generous heart and bright soul were the center of our production.

As She Likes It

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Preface

Queen. Goddess. Nymph. Whore. Puppet.

As an actor who has worked with Shakespeare's plays since I was 15, I am fascinated by the emotional complexity that has kept us engaged with Will's words for centuries. As a woman, and therefore an actor with a very narrow roster of roles with which to wrangle, I am even more intrigued by the rank and file of actresses who line up to audition and vie for the handful of roles allotted them. Of course, there are trouser roles for modern actresses, and there are loads of nontraditional and nonbinary ways to cast Shakespeare's plays to give actors of all genders more opportunities to bite in.

Nevertheless, Will's women are a relatively small, if powerful, group of characters. Within that group are incredible roles, parts any actor would be overjoyed to tackle. Some of the women are underwritten. Some are given too little time onstage, with the most interesting stuff happening to them elsewhere and elsewhen. Having played a few of these roles myself, I was hungry for the opportunity to learn more about some of these ladies.

Years ago, I worked with several talented playwrights to craft an original theatrical work that explored and interpreted nine of Shakespeare's sonnets. The *Sonnet Inspirations* show revealed to us how exciting it could be to work with living playwrights to create new works that played with, expanded upon and interpreted these classic plays. I knew then that I wanted to put together a new show about Will's women, so I once again reached out to a network of playwrights and asked for submissions.

The parameters were simple. I was looking to cast all women. The central character of the short play must be one of Shakespeare's characters. The setting could be modern or historical. It could be some part of Shakespeare's story that

we never see onstage, or perhaps something that happens before or after the action of the full play. The characters could be placed into a completely different world or context to work out the conflicts and themes of Shakespeare's plays.

The happy results are the seven plays of this collection. These plays feature great roles for women, which is no small thing, but they also provide audiences and theatre practitioners alike ways to discuss important themes, hopefully leaving everyone with a broader, more flexible understanding of the Shakespeare canon.

In *Haircuts*, by Barbara Trainin Blank, Anne Boleyn from *Henry VIII* and Isabella from *Measure for Measure* meet in a barber shop. The condemned queen and the devout novice discover what they have in common as they discuss the choices they have made, the men in their lives, and how a haircut may help them take control of the rest of their lives.

Lori Myers's *The Shrew Must Go On* finds high-school thespian Melanie Gold suffering from stage fright. She prays for a natural disaster to save her from taking the stage as Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew*. She doesn't quite get her wish—instead, the real Katherine from the 1500s shows up in Melanie's dressing room to provide her with a pep talk and some sisterly solidarity.

In a reimagining of *Much Ado About Nothing* by David Nice, the quick-witted Beatriz defends her independence to her cousin Yolanda and the rest of her Puerto Rican *familia*, who are conspiring to match her up with Bennie.

Sandra Fenichel Asher's *The Nurse's Rebellion* gives the Nurse from *Romeo and Juliet* a chance to share her strong opinions about the way Shakespeare is writing the play—she even steps off the page to argue with the playwright. Juliet

and Lady Capulet are confused by the Nurse's odd behavior, as they try to stick to the script while Will wrestles with his character's determination to avert the coming tragedy.

In *Another Conversation*, the last thing Gertrude remembers is drinking a toast to Hamlet. Playwright Marjorie Bicknell's Gertrude finds herself in a mysterious place when Ophelia shows up to set the record straight.

Sean Adams delivers *A Woman's Battle* about the legendary Trojan women, all waiting for their men to return from an ill-fated clash with Achilles and the Greek army. Cassandra is tortured by her visions of the future and Andromache, Helen and Hecuba fight their own battles—for love, respect, family and survival—behind the walls of Troy.

Sue Lange resets the conflict of *King Lear* in *The Lear Sisters* as a modern battle for power of attorney for their aging father. Gordy wants to control Daddy's late-night poker games. Reenie wants to marry Eddie. Claudia just wants her father to be happy.

As She Likes It premiered at Gamut Theatre in Harrisburg, Pa., as part of their Stage Door Series. The staging was simple and fluid—a few chairs and a table. This allowed the characters to drive the show forward and kept the action focused on their words and journeys. We opened with a prologue featuring the entire ensemble speaking words and phrases taken from Shakespeare's text. The production also featured a dance piece choreographed by Della M. Cowell that explored the destructive dynamic between Tamora and Livinia from *Titus Andronicus*.

It is my hope that these plays may offer opportunities for thoughtful scene study, educational exploration, and a larger conversation about how these women's stories resonate in our current era.

As She Likes It

Prologue

(ACTOR 1 enters to C.)

ACTOR 1. Help me, my women!

ALL *(as ALL enter to places, overlapping).*

Wife

Mother

Daughter

ACTOR 2. Madam

ACTOR 3. My most seeming-virtuous queen:

ACTOR 4. Mistress

ACTOR 5. Sister

ACTOR 6. Good sister

ACTOR 7. Patient sister

ACTOR 8. Your sister is the better soldier.

ACTOR 9. Nymph

ACTOR 10. Be somewhat scater of your maiden presence;

ALL. **Maiden**

ACTOR 11. Maid

ACTOR 12. Fair maid

ACTOR 11. A virtuous maid

ACTOR 13. I find you passing gentle.

ACTOR 11. Women are made to bear, and so are you.

ACTOR 16. I am come to know your pleasure.

ACTOR 3. ... Yield my body up to shame.

ACTOR 13. I am possess'd with an adulterate blot

ACTOR 2. My blood is mingled with the crime of lust

ACTOR 7. The lady doth protest too much, methinks.

(ALL look to ACTOR 7, beat.)

ACTOR 8. Hold your tongue,

Naughty lady

ACTOR 14. No mates for you unless you were of gentler,
milder mould.

ACTOR 5. Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow

ACTOR 9. She is wronged, she is slandered, she is undone.

ALL. I am not a slut!

ACTOR 1 *(beat)*. O, speak again, bright angel!

ACTOR 15. That thou didst know how many fathom deep I
am in love!

ACTOR 4. beauty

ACTOR 16. virtue

ACTORS 4 & 16. **honour**

ACTOR 16. loneliness

ACTOR 6. Hath homely age th' alluring beauty took from my
poor cheek?

ACTOR 14. Do you not know I am a woman?

ACTOR 10. I have a man's mind, but a woman's might

ACTOR 2. A woman clad in armor ...

ACTOR 3. Come to my woman's breasts, and take my milk
for gall, you murd'ring ministers.

ACTOR 16. Would we had all such wives, that the men might
go to wars with the women!

ACTOR 12. And none but women left to wail the dead.

ACTOR 8. I thank God I am not a woman ...

ACTOR 7. O God, that I were a man! I would eat his heart in
the marketplace.

(Beat. Everyone begins to move and set the scene as they speak. The underlined words may be repeated and overlapped.)

ACTOR 13. In faith, she's too curst.

ACTOR 6. She is too rough for me

ACTOR 11. rough and coy and sullen,

ALL. **Shrew!**

ACTOR 9. She speaks poniards, and every word stabs:

ACTOR 10. Mistress minion

ACTOR 12. disobedient wretch!

ACTOR 8. For shame, thou holding of a devilish spirit,

(Begin overlapping, interjecting insults.)

ACTOR 13. Tempter.

ACTOR 16. Get thee to a nunnery

ACTOR 4. Kate the curst

ACTOR 2. That wench is stark mad

ACTOR 5. angry wenches

ACTOR 3. wicked creatures

ACTOR 7. you unnatural hags

ACTOR 5. Wench

ACTOR 9. A devil

ACTOR 8. Shame.

ACTOR 7. Devil's dam

ACTOR 14. Frailty!

ACTOR 15. cry like a woman

(Overlapping insults build to a crescendo, as everyone exits.)

ACTOR 1. Help me, my women!

The Shrew Must Go On

By Lori M. Myers

CHARACTERS

MELANIE GOLD: Somewhat insecure high-schooler with teenage angst.

KATHERINE (KATE): The character straight out of Shakespeare's play; quick-tempered, insistent droll with a vulnerable side.

HARRIET: Stage manager; gruff, take-no-prisoners man who has a job to do and does it.

SETTING: A high-school theatre dressing room. There is a vanity table with a chair. Directly behind is a rack filled with period costumes. Nearby is another chair. A bouquet or two of flowers is on a corner table. Attached to one is a large floating balloon on which is written, "It's a Girl!"

AT RISE: *MELANIE is sitting at the vanity. Her head is down, her hands clutched together in her lap, her arms pasted to her sides, she trembles a bit. She is like a curled-up emotional ball. She's speaking faster than her brain is thinking.*

MELANIE. I can't believe I'm doing this. I can't believe it. What was I thinking? That's just it. I wasn't thinking. Why wasn't I thinking? *(As she speaks, she gradually raises her head to look at herself in the imaginary mirror.)* I think in class, I think at home, always thinking, always. But not

about tonight. Maybe ... maybe there's a way out. My brother found a way out when Mom and Dad caught him smoking weed. He lied and told them it was for a medical condition. He told them he loved them so much that he wanted to save them the grief and they believed him. So maybe I can tell the director I have this irritable bowel, and I smoked pot because of the horrible pain, and I'm too high to go on, and I have the munchies for sour cream garlic potato chips and if I eat five bags but do all that's demanded of me physically in this play, then I'll vomit and the stage will be really slippery and ...

HARRIET (*offstage*). Fifteen minutes till places ...

MELANIE. Thank you, fifteen, and you can't play a character like Katherine all doubled over and holding your stomach, high as a kite, stuffing chips in your mouth while you're upchucking all over Padua, but then I'll feel guilty for the play being canceled and everyone will know what I did and they'll laugh behind my back in the hallways and no one will want to be with me and I'll have to be homeschooled and ... wait. Wait! An earthquake! I'll pray real hard now for an earthquake and for the earth to open up and swallow the school and the set and mean Principal Brady, but not my hamster in biology lab, not Sylvester, my sweet furball ...

(*A knock offstage.*)

HARRIET (*peeks in*). Hey, Melanie Gold, you OK in here?

MELANIE. Yeah, not really, I mean, no, yeah. Yes!

HARRIET. OK. Whatever. Just checkin'.

MELANIE. That's it. I'll pray for an earthquake. C'mon ground! C'mon Mother Nature. Do an earthquake! Then it'll be your "fault" the show didn't go on, not mine ... Ha,

“fault.” Get it? Earthquake. Fault. I must still be in my right mind if I’m coming up with puns. OK, OK. I’m going to pray for an earthquake now.

(MELANIE motions all sorts of prayer positions and movements as if trying to decide which will get results. There are short pauses between each one. She crosses herself [Catholic], davens [sways-Jewish], raises her arms and dances [Baptist], kneels and tries to combine as many of the others as she can all in one [this is a “bit”].)

KATHERINE enters, dressed in the identical costume. She notices MELANIE.)

KATHERINE. How now! What is this at my feet?

(MELANIE rises, stares at KATHERINE in wonderment. The two women eye each other, top to bottom, circling each other to the right, then left, never taking their eyes off each other.)

MELANIE. Are you my understudy?

KATHERINE. Understudy? Young lady, I am not *under* anything or anyone. Never forget that. Why were you praying, pray tell?

MELANIE. You wouldn’t understand. *(Hits her forehead with the heel of her hand.)* Stupid, stupid, stupid!

(KATHERINE notices the “It’s a Girl” balloon.)

KATHERINE. What is this air-filled orb? *(Reads.)* “It’s a Girl.” Oh, my goodness! You had a female child, here, now, backstage in this theatre, with dirty and dusty actors around?

MELANIE. No, no, no. My brother bought it by mistake. He’d just taken his medication.

A Woman's Battle

By Sean Adams

CHARACTERS

CASSANDRA
ANDROMACHE
HELEN
HECUBA

SETTING. The royal palace of Troy.

(Enter CASSANDRA. She is both gifted and cursed with the sight of things to come.)

CASSANDRA. The scene. the royal palace of Troy. Enter Cassandra. She is gifted with the sight of things to come ... and cursed that no man will believe her. The battle rages beyond the walls. Enter Andromache, wife of Hector.

ANDROMACHE *(offstage)*. Cassandra?

CASSANDRA. I'm here.

(Enter ANDROMACHE, wife of Hector.)

ANDROMACHE. Cassandra, there you are. You can't wander off alone that way.

CASSANDRA. This is where we needed to be.

ANDROMACHE. We should return to your room.

CASSANDRA. Enter Helen, once of Sparta, now of Troy.

ANDROMACHE. What? (*Confused, she looks around to see if HELEN is coming, sees no one.*) Come, sister. Let's keep you occupied. We can weave on the loom. You enjoy that, yes?

CASSANDRA. It is you who needs to be occupied. I am always occupied.

ANDROMACHE. Preoccupied, perhaps.

CASSANDRA. *Post*-occupied. Occupied with what has already come to pass. And I don't enjoy weaving. I see it often enough. Can't avoid seeing it. The threads. The loom. Always looming.

(Enter HELEN, once of Sparta, now of Troy.)

HELEN. Oh. Hello, Cassandra.

ANDROMACHE. Helen. Cassandra and I were just going to take a walk. Would you care to join us, sister?

CASSANDRA. No, we don't take a walk. We stay here for some time. This is where it happens.

HELEN. You don't need to call me that. I'm not your sister.

ANDROMACHE. I mean by marriage, of course. Just as Cassandra and I are sisters.

HELEN. Paris and I aren't married.

ANDROMACHE. Well. Technically, perhaps not. But my husband's brother loves you, so that makes you my sister. And perhaps you will be married to him one day.

CASSANDRA. She won't be.

(HELEN fidgets, and wrings her hands nervously.)

ANDROMACHE. Hush, Cassandra. (*She notices HELEN's behavior.*) Did you need something, Helen?

HELEN. I just ... Paris has gone to fight today. I don't know how you do it. How you can wait here, day after day, for your husband to return.

ANDROMACHE. We all have our battles. Hector's battle is outside the gates. Mine is to wait for his return.

HELEN. Yes. Well. Do enjoy your walk.

ANDROMACHE. You're sure you won't join us?

HELEN. Please stop pretending. I know very well that everyone in this city hates me.

ANDROMACHE. No one hates you, Helen. (*HELEN looks at her incredulously.*) I don't hate you, Helen.

HELEN. Don't you? Your city is at war with all of Greece because of me. Today your husband goes forth to fight Achilles, the world's greatest warrior, because of me. Can you stand there and truly say you don't hate me?

(*Pause.*)

ANDROMACHE. Hector asked me to treat you as family. And so I shall. I have no family left of my own, just my husband and his family. And now our baby boy, Astyanax. So I know how important family is.

HELEN (*laughing, without mirth*). And you don't have to like family in order to love them. Something like that? (*An awkward silence.*) How is your boy?

ANDROMACHE (*happy to change the subject*). Sleeping. The nursemaids all fawn over him. The little lord of the city, they call him. Hopefully he will have more brothers soon. Hector and Paris have so many. A boy should have brothers.

HELEN. I have a daughter. Hermione. Back in Sparta.

ANDROMACHE. You must miss her terribly.

HELEN. Yes. (*Changing the subject.*) Hector ... he is always so kind to me. The only one. He is a good man.

Another Conversation

By Marjorie Bicknell

CHARACTERS

QUEEN GERTRUDE: Hamlet's mother.

OPHELIA: Polonius' daughter, Laertes' sister and Hamlet's one-time love.

SETTING: Somewhere else. Possibly heaven. Possibly not.

(At curtain's rise, the stage is empty except for a table and two chairs DR and a bench UL. On the table is a jug of wine and one wine glass or goblet. C stands QUEEN GERTRUDE holding another goblet in one hand, a handkerchief in the other.)

GERTRUDE. Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows.

(She holds out her handkerchief and waits for someone to take it. When the handkerchief remains in her hand, she shrugs in the direction of the unseen person, pulls back her hand and lifts the goblet in her other hand in a toast.)

GERTRUDE (*cont'd*). The queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.

(She lifts the cup to drink, then stops and turns in the other direction as though looking at a second person. She speaks again, as though mocking what another has said.)

GERTRUDE (*cont'd*). “Gertrude, do not drink.” (*She raises the cup again.*) I will, my lord; I pray you, pardon me.

(*She drinks, then turns back and raises the handkerchief again. OPHELIA enters from UR and watches GERTRUDE unseen.*)

GERTRUDE (*to an unseen Hamlet*). Come, let me wipe thy face. (*No response. She repeats.*) Hamlet, come! Thou art fat and scant of breath. Let thy mother rub thy brows.

OPHELIA. Good day, madam!

(*GERTRUDE turns at the sound of OPHELIA's voice.*)

GERTRUDE. What?

OPHELIA. I am pleased to find you here.

GERTRUDE. Who speaks? Ophelia?

OPHELIA. Yes, madam.

GERTRUDE. But you are—

OPHELIA (*cutting GERTRUDE off with a smile*). Here with you, as you can see.

GERTRUDE. I must be dreaming. I saw you—!

OPHELIA. Yes, you saw me pulled from the stream. Yet here I am ... and so very pleased to see you. (*Pause.*) I am hoping that we can talk.

GERTRUDE. How can you be here? You are drowned. I saw you pulled from the river. I wept at your graveside.

OPHELIA (*shrugging off GERTRUDE's comment*). Perhaps you did. Perhaps it was but a dream.

GERTRUDE. Perhaps I need another drink.

(*GERTRUDE goes to the table to pour a drink. OPHELIA reaches it first and picks up the jug.*)

OPHELIA. Perhaps we should both have one.

(OPHELIA fills the second cup then takes GERTRUDE's cup and fills it. She hands it back to GERTRUDE.)

OPHELIA *(cont'd)*. Now ... to what shall we drink? Our future? Our past? Absent friends? What say you, Gertrude?

GERTRUDE. What? Did you call me Gertrude? I am your queen! You are to call me your majesty, your grace—and if I allow it—madam.

OPHELIA. Ah, but you are no longer my queen.

GERTRUDE. Of course I am.

OPHELIA. We are no longer in Denmark. Nor will we be ever again.

(OPHELIA sits and takes a sip of her wine while GERTRUDE watches in shock.)

OPHELIA *(cont'd)*. Gertrude, do you know this place?

GERTRUDE. Why, we are in the great hall. The court is here to see Hamlet and Laertes duel for sport. I am a good mother, but I do believe I should have put my wager on Laertes. Hamlet seems slow and fat since he returned from England. I am certain he did not practice his swordsmanship while he was gone.

OPHELIA. Look again.

GERTRUDE *(looks around)*. They are not here! *(Surprised, she pauses.)* They must have gone outside where there is more space for the combat. Let us follow. We will miss it.

OPHELIA. Look again. You are no longer in the great hall. There is no courtyard outside, and if there were, you would not find the others in it. They are in a different place entirely.

GERTRUDE. Nonsense. They are outside. I will join them there.

Beatriz ... If You Speak of Love

By David Nice

CHARACTERS

BEATRIZ: a Puerto Rican woman in central Pennsylvania, in her early 30s.

YOLANDA: a cousin and lifelong friend of Beatriz, in her late 20s.

SETTING: Now. Harrisburg, Pa.

(The stage is set with two chairs or perhaps a bench or sofa. BEATRIZ and YOLANDA enter in the middle of a familiar conversation. It is a place that is comfortable to both women, and they sit down or move freely about the space.)

BEATRIZ. *Mi amor*, you and I have been down this road so many times before.

YOLANDA. No, *prima*, we *talk* about this road, but *you* never actually start the trip.

BEATRIZ. Funny woman. You have your destination and I have mine.

YOLANDA. *Bueno*, I do have a destination.

BEATRIZ. And your GPS works differently than mine ...

YOLANDA. Yes, amusing, dear. But I do have my man now ... and someday soon we'll be married and have our little ones. *Familia!*

BEATRIZ. And, *Titi* will be so happy. Not to mention my *Tio*, the new chief, who wants little grandchildren everywhere,

I'm sure. (*Pause.*) Wait! Your father didn't put you up to this conversation this time, did he?

YOLANDA. Oh, stop it. He would never interfere like that. (*Slight pause.*) And you said it yourself, since he became chief of police, he's got no time for anything extra. Oh, *dios mio*, not that family is extra—

BEATRIZ. Now you stop! Let it go. Yolanda, I know everyone in the family just wants me to be happy.

YOLANDA. Exactly!

BEATRIZ. And you just want me to find purpose and satisfaction.

YOLANDA. *Seguro.*

BEATRIZ. Good. Because I *am* happy. *Without* a husband. Without someone getting in my way. I am very happy *without* a man.

YOLANDA. OK, sure. That's very *Americana* of you.

BEATRIZ. If avoiding the stupidity of dating and boring dinners, and meaningless chatter, and knucklehead overgrown boys is being American, than I am a Yankee Doodle Dandy. (*Pause.*) Besides, it's not the *Anglo* guys who are so ready to sweep you over *a sus casas* and meet their mommies right off the bat. The Anglo men, while they are also ridiculous in their own exhaustive ways, at least are living in the twenty-first century.

YOLANDA. So we should just forget about introducing you to any more *Puertorriquenos*.

BEATRIZ. Oh, *introductions*. It's just introductions you're speaking of. Then, of course, I'll say hello to them.

YOLANDA. Excellent.

BEATRIZ. Then I will say *adios*.

YOLANDA. Beatriz!

BEATRIZ. You start the conversation. They may even look charming—the outer packaging. They make small talk. They

examine your body even as you watch them watching. Then, and this always gets me, they'll ask me which town in PR my people are from. I'll tell them Fajardo. They'll ask me if I know so-and-so. Then, blah, blah, blah. I'll tell them I don't know how to make *arroz con condules*. Or *tostones*. I am then gone, so gone. And, then *you* and your mama can have them hanging out in *your* kitchen for the rest of the night.

YOLANDA. I know one gentleman who you might still want to see.

BEATRIZ. You know a *gentleman*?

YOLANDA. Oh, stop. This gentleman is very respectable. He is well-connected. He has a good family. And this gentleman also just got a new and better job.

BEATRIZ. Beyond the basic jobs that all men have—belching, passing gas, drinking and watching Sports Net Central?

YOLANDA. Are you done?

BEATRIZ. No. Because, *then*, after you try to hold a reasonably intelligent conversation about ideas or books or *anything* really ... Puerto Rican men will still return to the expectation that you will make them rice and beans. Like their momma's. While they are drinking beer with the other men, far off in the other room. Life cannot be all about beans and beer.

YOLANDA. Thank you.

BEATRIZ. Sorry, that's not right. Actually, they are probably drinking rum and cokes, not beer, but—

YOLANDA. OK. I give up. I'm done. But, be careful cousin ... one of these days you are going to meet your match. You *will* fall in love.

BEATRIZ. Love. *Por favor*. Don't speak of love. (*Slight pause*.) What's happened to you, Yolanda? When we were little girls we pretended that we were She-Ra, Princess of Power, and we would say that there is no man who is our match. *No man*. Remember? (*Pause*.) Who is this man anyway?

The Lear Sisters

By Sue Lange

CHARACTERS

CLAUDIA: 30s.

REENIE: 40s.

GORDY: 50s.

CHARACTER NOTE: Claudia, Reenie, and Gordy are sisters.

Any ethnicity is fine.

PRODUCTION NOTE: ... indicates lost in thought; — indicates speech is cut off.

(The waiting room of a hospital. A few chairs and a low table with magazines. CLAUDIA and REENIE are in different corners of the room, silent and not facing each other for a few moments.)

CLAUDIA (*turning*). Where's Gordy? I don't want to wait any longer.

REENIE. Gordy's here. She's in with Dad.

CLAUDIA. I thought you said to wait for Gordy. Let's go, then.

(GORDY comes rushing in with papers. She doesn't see CLAUDIA at first.)

GORDY. He signed!

CLAUDIA. He signed?

(GORDY sees CLAUDIA.)

GORDY. Oh, I didn't know you were here yet. Took you long enough.

CLAUDIA. I left as soon as I heard. What did he sign?

GORDY. Oh, it's ...

REENIE. It's a power of attorney.

CLAUDIA. Oh ... What?

(She grabs the power of attorney from GORDY and reads it. REENIE looks over her shoulder, smiling.)

CLAUDIA *(cont'd)*. Why?

GORDY. We need it for when he's incapacitated. I ... we, will need to be able to pay for his—

CLAUDIA. "We." You're the only one listed. And by the way, he's not incapacitated. He just broke his hip. You make it sound like he had a stroke.

GORDY. He's going to have a stroke.

CLAUDIA. No, he's not. He's very healthy.

GORDY. Well, there's healthy and then there's healthy.

CLAUDIA. What's that supposed to mean?

REENIE. He was yelling at the wind again.

(CLAUDIA and GORDY turn to look at her.)

CLAUDIA. Yelling at the wind?

GORDY. He yells at the wind.

REENIE. Like a crazy person.

CLAUDIA. "Like a crazy person." He's not crazy.

GORDY. He just yells at the wind.

CLAUDIA. He can take care of himself. There's no reason—

REENIE. What about the wind?

CLAUDIA (*sharply*). What about the wind?

GORDY. Enough with the wind. The point is he's close to losing it.

CLAUDIA. No he's not. His doctors say he's really fit.

GORDY. His mind, Claudia, his mind!

CLAUDIA. And you're an expert.

GORDY. Well, I've been watching him for the past six months. Where have you been?

CLAUDIA. And why did that even happen? He was fine on his own. Why all of a sudden did he need to move in with you?

GORDY. It was his idea.

CLAUDIA. I doubt that very much.

GORDY. Why's that? Is it so hard to believe that Dad would want to stay with old Gordy, the forgotten child?

CLAUDIA. No, because he didn't ...

GORDY. What? Come to you first, his favorite? His darling baby Claudia. He didn't ask to move in with you?

CLAUDIA. Actually he did.

GORDY. He did what?

CLAUDIA. Come to me first.

GORDY. Oh poo.

CLAUDIA. It's true. I said he was better off where he was. I have a fourth floor studio. Where were his buddies going to go on poker night?

GORDY. Hm!

CLAUDIA. When he said he couldn't stand living in his place without Mom, I told him to buy an apartment uptown. I could move in with him. Or maybe we could—

GORDY. You hurt his feelings.

CLAUDIA. Please. He was all set to check into Glendale when the next thing I know—

Haircuts

By Barbara Trainin Blank

CHARACTERS

ANNE BOLEYN: Queen of England, second wife of Henry VIII. Beautiful, strong-willed, sharp-tongued. Early-to-mid-30s.

ISABELLA: a novice and central character from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. Sweet, attractive to men, morally principled. 20s.

TIME: May 1536.

SETTING: A barbershop somewhere in London.

(A room with three chairs. Beauty salon-type chairs are preferable, but any chairs will do. There is a magazine rack nearby, and a mirror on the wall. ANNE BOLEYN is sitting in a chair, reading a newspaper. She crosses and uncrosses her legs nervously. She gets up to look at the mirror, plays with her hair and makes a face. She peers off into the distance, then sits down again. A sign hanging on the wall reads: "Barber: Women My Specialty." But there is no sign of the barber.)

ANNE. Where the devil is he? I don't have all the time in the world. In fact, *(Her tone grows somber.)* I have very little. *(Her hands instinctively touch her neck, which soon will be cut by order of her husband, Henry VIII. Then her mood bounces back.)* Well, time is a relative thing. How often do I get to relax—sort of—and read the latest news?

ISABELLA (*enters timidly, looking lost*). Excuse me.

ANNE (*imperiously*). Yes?

ISABELLA. Is this ... ?

ANNE. Well?

ISABELLA. Is this ... the barber's?

ANNE. That is what the sign says. Can you not read? You can hardly speak.

ISABELLA. They encourage silence. There.

ANNE. And where is *there*?

ISABELLA. Is it not obvious? The convent. I am ... a novice.

ANNE. That seems a waste. Of course, the Protestants will probably do away with the entire institution.

ISABELLA. I don't understand ...

ANNE. It would do you no good to understand what has yet to be. What is your name, girl?

ISABELLA. Isabella.

ANNE (*shudders*). I hate that name. She was the mother of Mary, my worst enemy.

ISABELLA. I hardly chose it.

ANNE. No matter. Our acquaintance will no doubt be short-lived, once the barber returns ...

ISABELLA. And why is that?

ANNE. I ... I do not know you well enough to explain it if you do not know already.

ISABELLA. Then I will not ask. But where is the barber?

ANNE. I know not, but will have his head when he shows his face. (*Pause.*) Well, perhaps that wording is infelicitous. I will wait till he has done his duty, which might require his head.

ISABELLA. I don't understand that either.

ANNE. You understand little and say less. But since the barber is notably absent, we might as well speak with each other. If only to pass the time.

ISABELLA. I will try, madam. Words and I seem to be ...

ANNE. Poor friends, yes. Then let me do the speaking.

ISABELLA. It is only because I am shy with strangers that words and I struggle. Otherwise, they say, I am quite the talker. Men are drawn to my fluent speech, as much as to ...

ANNE. Then why are you in a convent? It seems, to repeat, a waste for one like you. But for myself, (*Sigh.*) it would be welcome.

ISABELLA. If I may be so bold ... A nun's life would hardly suit you.

ANNE. How dare you presume? People said I could not be queen, but I proved them wrong. I was a memorable queen. I am a memorable queen.

ISABELLA. Your majesty. I did not know. (*She curtsies.*)

ANNE. I am Anne Boleyn. Known the world over. Surely you have heard of me.

ISABELLA. We hear little of the outside world.

ANNE. Then hear and know this. I can be a nun or a chambermaid or even an archbishop in disguise. Anne Boleyn can be anything she wants to be.

ISABELLA. I did not mean to offend, your majesty.

ANNE. But you did. Why would it not suit me?

ISABELLA. Because you are so beautiful. So full of life.

ANNE. Others have remarked on that beauty. But "full of life" is one thing I am not. In fact, I am nearly dead.

ISABELLA. Are you ill? Do not despair. I have healing arts.

ANNE. I am in perfect health, but beyond your care ...

The Nurse's Rebellion

By Sandra Fenichel Asher

CHARACTERS

JULIET

NURSE

LADY CAPULET

SHAKESPEARE

TIME: Late 1500s.

SETTING: Inside and outside Shakespeare's imagination.

(SHAKESPEARE is DR, at work on a new script. He pauses in his writing to reread the last passage. As he does so, lights come up on JULIET's bedroom, CL. JULIET is staring angrily off L. Throughout the play, SHAKESPEARE speaks in unison with the characters at first, and then continues reading or writing silently, nodding, gesturing, occasionally mouthing the words while the characters increasingly take ownership of their lines.)

NOTE: Actual lines from Romeo and Juliet are in italics, but some adjustments have been made for the purposes of this fantasy. When the actors are not speaking the lines written by Shakespeare, they are still his characters, "off duty" from the story but formal in voice and posture. They are NOT actors relaxing between rehearsal scenes. However, Shakespeare hasn't finished his script, so the characters are not yet set in stone. And they have opinions.)

JULIET (*with SHAKESPEARE, for the first few words, and then alone, while he continues reading and writing*). Ancient damnation! O most wicked fiend,
 Is it more sin to wish me thus forsworn,
 Or to dispraise my lord with that same tongue
 Which she hath praised him with above compare
 So many thousand times? Go, counselor,
 Thou and my bosom henceforth shall be twain.
 I'll to the friar to know his remedy.
 If all else fail, myself have power to die.

(*She exits R. NURSE storms on from L, watches JULIET go with surprise and indignation and then confronts SHAKESPEARE.*)

NURSE. Why do you ask me to betray her? I have run and done and done and run to bind her to her Romeo—and now you have me tell her to abandon her first husband and take a second? No wonder the angel speaks of death! Who would believe such treachery from her faithful nurse?

SHAKESPEARE (*shuffling pages*). Hmmm. It is a worrisome thread, I grant you, but I have a plot to weave and little time in which to do it. Go speak your part as I have written it. It will play.

NURSE. It will NOT play!

SHAKESPEARE. IT WILL PLAY!

(*He finds the page he needs in a later scene, and begins reading as JULIET enters and joins him.*)

SHAKESPEARE & JULIET. Ay, those attires are best. But,
 gentle Nurse,
 I pray thee leave me to myself tonight,

*For I have need of many orisons
To move the heavens to smile upon my state,
Which, well thou knowest is cross and full of sin.*

NURSE (with a defiant glance toward SHAKESPEARE). I do
“well knowest” and that is why I prefer not to leave you—

*(SHAKESPEARE and JULIET stare at NURSE in confusion
for a beat, then resume written script as LADY CAPULET
enters. NURSE stewes in evident concern and frustration.)*

SHAKESPEARE & LADY CAPULET. *What, are you busy,
ho? Need you my help?*

SHAKESPEARE & JULIET. *No, madam. We have culled
such necessaries*

*As are behoveful for our state tomorrow.
So please you, let me now be left alone,
And let the Nurse this night sit up with you—*

NURSE. NO!

(Others stare at her in surprise.)

NURSE (cont'd). What are you all looking at? This is so wrong!

*(A beat, then lines resume as written, with a hint of
consternation from the others, while NURSE stands wide-
eyed and thin-lipped.)*

SHAKESPEARE & JULIET. *For I am sure you have your
hands full all*

In this so sudden business.

SHAKESPEARE & LADY CAPULET. *Good night.*

Get thee to bed, and rest, for thou hast need.

SHAKESPEARE (reading what he's written). *Exeunt
MOTHER and NURSE.*