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# VOMITING SHAKESPEARE & OTHER SMALL TRAGEDIES

*Tanya N. Eby*

So I decide I'm gonna try out for this Shakespeare play on campus. I've always wanted to be an actress, I guess. The only thing is I get painfully shy sometimes, but I can just feel this play is gonna be different. I can just see myself onstage wearing one of those heavy dresses and a wig, and I can practically hear those Shakespearean words coming out of my mouth.

All you have to do for the audition is memorize a monologue and be ready to read some parts cold. So I decide I'm gonna be like another Sir Laurence Olivier—well, the female version, like Laura Olivia or something—'cause I hear he's really great. I've never seen him do Shakespeare, but I did see him in *Clash of the Titans*. He played Zeus and he just sat in his throne for like the entire movie and there was this weird light shooting out from his head or something, and he talked in this real deep and rigid voice. He actually kinda sucked, but I hear he did an awesome Hamlet. You know, TO BE (big dramatic pause) OR NOT, TO BEEEEEE (another dramatic pause) **THAT IS THE QUEST-EON!** That was Olivier I think.

Anyway, the day comes for auditions and I am ready. I've got the right hair, the right outfit, I've got the perfect monologue—slightly funny with just a dash of tragedy. I've been practicing my monologue constantly—in the shower, in my sleep, in my boyfriend's ear—and I know it backwards and forwards. I've also got the perfect introduction to give myself. You know, most people give the basic: "Hello my name is blah, this is scene whatever, Act however many, from this crappy play." Not me though. I have this sixty-second, in-depth, personal bio that is gonna blow the director's hair out.

So I'm waiting in the hall and my name is called. I look to make sure the ruffles on my peasant blouse are lying where they should be, and that my long and flowing skirt is still long and flowing. So I walk onstage and it is totally empty and this voice comes out of the ceiling—I swear to you it's Sir Laurence Olivier as Zeus—and this voice booming out of the ceiling says "CENTER STAGE." I walk to the center of the stage and I just stand there and my lines are rushing through my head and I'm clenching and unclenching my fists and I'm saying to myself "You're great! You're gonna kick ass! You're Laura Olivia!" Then all the lights go out. Boom. The spotlight hits me, and I swear to God a camera materializes right in front of me and just stares at me, all evil-like with its red eye blinking.

"STATE YOUR NAME," the Voice says.

I, of course, forget my snappy introduction, I forget my Shakespearean voice, and these words just come out of my mouth from nowhere and it sounds like I've sucked helium or something. I say: "Uhm, hi (hee hee). My name is Sarah and I'm doing Act

V, scene I from *Macbeth* (hee hee hee)." Then I just stand there waiting 'cause I don't know if I'm supposed to start or what and my shirt is sticking to me because I'm sweating and I'm staring at that evil eye on the camera and it's just flashing and flashing and then it just goes steady and the Voice says "ACTION."

You're probably thinking I forgot the words, but I didn't. I delivered them perfectly—and just as if I were reciting a grocery list: "tomatoes, potatoes, out, damned, maxi pads, spot, bread, out, I, say...."

When I walk off the stage and out the hall, there are all these people asking what's it like, and how did I do. I tell them I did okay, which everyone thinks means I did great, so they get all depressed and stop asking me questions. I'm trying not to laugh or cry because I was so unforgivably horrible.

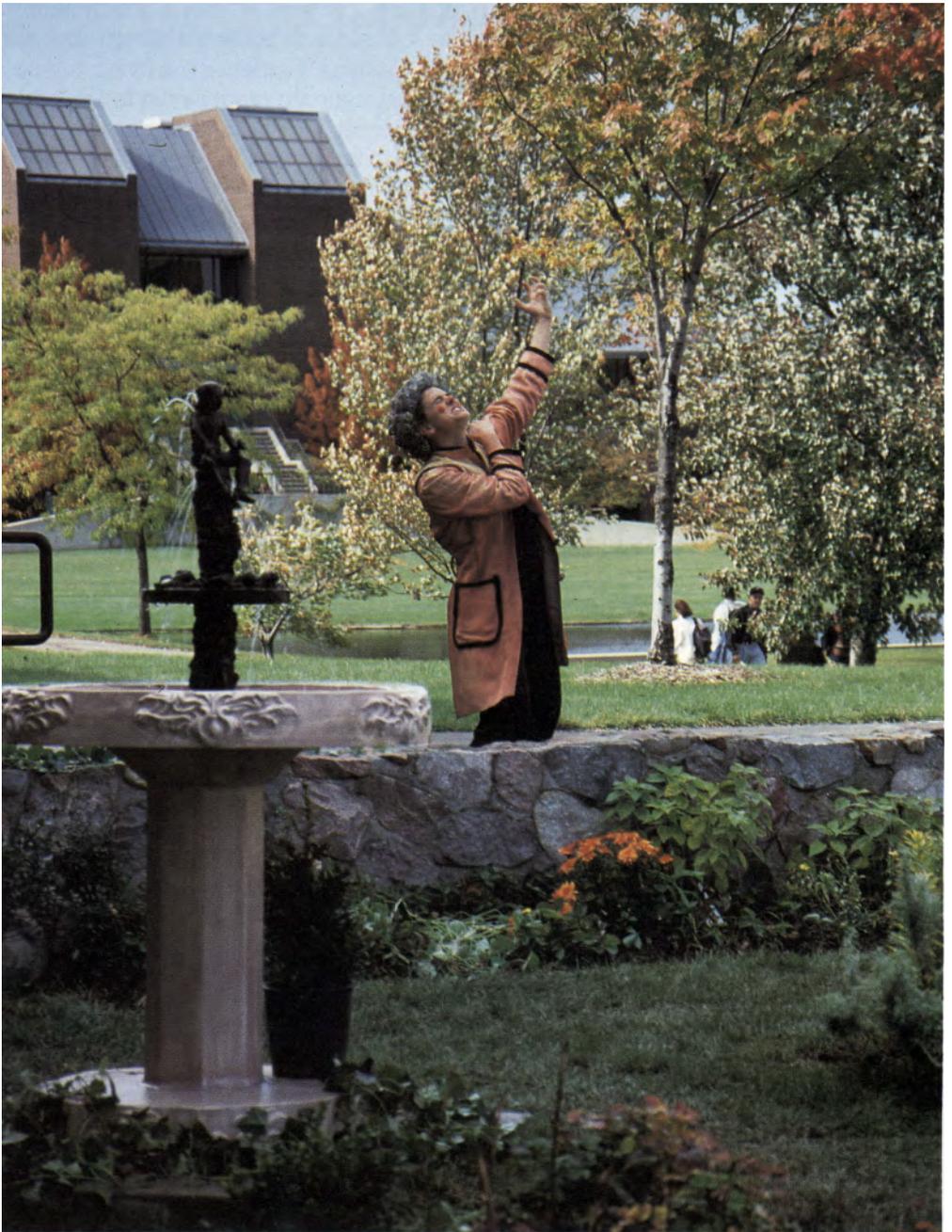
After everyone's been videotaped, this little person, I swear to God a Lilliputian, walks out and starts talking in this tiny voice. It's the director and she's telling us to go sit in the theatre so we can watch ourselves on videotape. She reminds me of that little creepy guy from the Wizard of Oz, you know, the one who isn't a wizard at all, just some guy who took a left turn at Albuquerque and ended up in Oz.

So I'm watching myself on videotape and it's like the kind of Shakespeare people make fun of on Saturday Night Live. I notice how there's no way I'm gonna get cast as Helena because I'm way too short. And I know I won't get cast as Hermia because I'm sorta ugly, and Titania is out of the question because my boobs are too big, and everyone knows fairies are little so they must have little boobs too. Everyone else is awesome. Really. I swear that Sir Laurence is afraid for his career—unless he's dead; then his career is still pretty safe.

The little director tells us to go onstage and walk around. She wants to see how we move. "Use all of the space," she says. So we get up there and people start doing really weird shit. I'm walking around and picking imaginary flowers and putting them in my imaginary basket (I'm trying to show my femininity and connection to nature). These other people—I don't know about them. Some of them are doing these Barishnikov leaps and glides. Some are pretending to do the backstroke. This other person is on the floor having a seizure or something, but it's not a regular seizure, because he's actually seizing across the floor.

This whole audition thing goes on for hours, and people are starting to look at me like I'm a weirdo or something because every time I read I do something strange. I emphasize every end rhyme, or I fall into that iambic pentameter curse where your voice goes lah-dah-lah. I am really, truly throwing up Shakespeare. I'm the worst-most-pathetic-big-boobed-short-never-gonna-measure-up-to-Olivier excuse for an actress. And the funny thing is, I get cast.

I'm pretty happy with my part because it's a speaking role, and only the best actors get speaking roles. Granted, I only say the word "Mustardseed", but it's all in how I say the word. I've got a thousand ways to say it, and I use all the levels of space when I'm on the stage. Sometimes I say "Mustardseed" like I'm really pissed off, sometimes I'm shy, I'm like the Seven Dwarves of Shakespeare. Tomorrow I'm gonna say it with a French accent. I'm gonna be great. I'm gonna kick ass. I'm gonna make Sir Laurence Olivier proud.



*Clown, Shakespeare Garden dedication, Fall, 1993*