

SCENE 2: The Theatre

Inside the theater NICK BOTTOM steps forward, standing center stage wearing a crown and cape. He is flanked by his TROUPE.

NICK

Oh noble kinsmen that royal blood and love do bind.
Seek now thy own succor, and flee thy native land.
To die today twill not be done til dawn
Ta-tee, ta-tum, da-dee-da-dum and who talks like this?

(to Nigel)

Nigel, why can't we just write like we speak?

TOM SNOOT

Yeah. I haven't understood a single word in our last three plays.

ROBIN enters in a dress.

ROBIN

Did I miss my cue?

NICK

Robin, what are you wearing? This isn't dress rehearsal.

ROBIN

Oh. I, um, thought it might help me get into character if I were to wear dresses and hang out in taverns and flirt with men. You know... for research.

PETER QUINCE

Nick, I have a question about motivation...

NICK

Yes...?

PETER QUINCE

Why haven't you given up yet?

NICK

Peter! This one is working, I can feel it—it's just missing something right here. Nige, help me out.

NIGEL

Um, well... I did write something in my notebook last night...

(removes a small leather bound book from his satchel)

I was thinking it might be good if King Richard is contemplating his own mortality... but now that I've said it out loud, it sounds stupid.

NICK

Well, let me read it.

NIGEL

It's probably terrible.

NICK

Let me see!

There's a tug of war. NICK finally gets the notebook and reads as NIGEL nervously looks on.

NIGEL

Oh, God, it's bad, isn't it? I don't even know why you let me write with you.

NICK

Nigel, it's good.

NIGEL

Yeah?

NICK

It's *really* good.

NIGEL

Well, I put a lot of layers in it...

NICK

One suggestion.

(pointing to pages)

How about instead of "tombstones" he says "epitaphs."

NIGEL

Oooh, yeah—that's better. Good one, brother.

NICK

Okay, everyone take your places. Let's try this.

(reading)

Let us talk of graves, of worms, of epitaphs;

(raised eyebrow to Nigel, impressed with himself)

Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth.

(then – fist pump)

Yes! That is good! I'm starting to believe this is gonna be the Bottom Brothers' first hit.

LORD CLAPHAM

Pity we have to shut it down!

LORD CLAPHAM, their patron, enters. He's a lesser lord and extravagantly overdresses to compensate; pink and orange satin with a ridiculously ornate feathered hat. THEY all bow to him.

NICK

Lord Clapham. What do you mean – shut it down?

LORD CLAPHAM

Guess whose next production is going to be *The Tragedy of Richard the 2nd*??

CLAPHAM unrolls a scroll/POSTER that says "THE TRAGEDIE OF RICHARD II by William Shakespeare." TROUPE GASPS!

NIGEL

Shakespeare??

NICK

Why is he doing *Richard the 2nd*?? He just did *Richard the 3rd*! Who goes backwards?!

NIGEL

He breaks convention. That's why he's so great.

NICK

Oh yeah? Did you see *Romeo and Juliet*? What's so great about two lovers who kill themselves in the end?

LORD CLAPHAM

OH, YOU'VE SPOILT IT! I'm seeing it this evening.

NIGEL

You should. It's life-changing.

NICK

Is it? "Love you, stab myself, drink poison, the end."

LORD CLAPHAM

(putting fingers in his ears, stomping like a child)

STOP IT! STOP IT, STOP IT! You're ruining everything! Now I paid for an original play and you will lose my patronage, do you hear? No more money – unless I hear a new idea – on the morrow!

TOM SNOOT

I think that means "tomorrow"

PETER QUINCE

If he quits, we're all out of a job...

CLAPHAM starts to exit. NICK follows.

NICK

Lord Clapham, please...

LORD CLAPHAM

Write something original – like the Bard!

CLAPHAM exits

NICK

The "bard." Why is he the Bard? He's uh bard. Just like I'm a bard, you're a bard.
HE'S JUST ONE OF THE BARDS!

NIGEL

He's the Bard because he does it all: histories, tragedies, comedies.

NICK

Comedies?? Name one thing of his that's funny. Gimme a line, anything.

NIGEL

"On my word, we'll not carry coals for then we should be colliers!"

NIGEL laughs. The TROUPE laughs.

NICK

That's not funny! Urggggghhhhhh...

#3 – *God, I Hate Shakespeare*

(stomping the downbeat)

GOD I HATE SHAKESPEARE!

TROUPE

<GASPS>

NICK

THAT'S RIGHT I SAID IT.

NIGEL

NO!

NICK

I DO I HATE SHAKESPEARE