

CHASING SHAKESPEARE

By Paola Hornbuckle

c. 2019
1850 Radius Drive Apt 313
Hollywood, Florida 33020
c 619 227 4883
paola.hornbuckle7@gmail.com

Setting: Sojourner Truth University, a small, traditionally black and female, liberal arts college in Atlanta, Georgia. It has recently become co-educational.

Time: 1990

List of Characters: (4 men, 4 women. There is flexibility in casting as far as race. I want the casting to be as diverse as our country and to reflect it. Still, it is strongly encouraged that in the original faculty at Sojourner Truth at least one of the teachers and two of the three students be African-American. From the invading faculty, it is strongly encouraged that that Robert Bellamy be African-American.)

Dr. Robert Bellamy-(40s/50s/60s) Very distinguished, charismatic, Yale educated, classicist who is an inspirational and generous teacher but egocentric and a mediocre playwright. He is devoted to the Canon and is opposed to identity politics in the humanities. He is also a bit silly, clueless and awkward. A devoted Shakespearean scholar, he is obsessed with creating a romantic movement in contemporary drama, and with personal success. Deep down he is an unfulfilled Romantic.

Katia Bellamy - (40s/50s/60s) His devoted wife. Upper crust, refined, intellectual in her own right, she is loyal to him and to his mission, overlooking his personal faults. She is gentle, loving, and giving. She tries, not always successfully, to ignore her loneliness, and desire for his attention.

Olivia/Puck – (20's) Student. A positive and quietly confident person, she develops a very intense personal connection with Robert that stimulates him emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually.

John Kane – (40s/50s/60s) Robert's ally, co-conspirator, and lifelong friend. He helps Robert without question, but is tired of Robert's eccentricities and resentful of his treatment of Katia, for whom he still carries a torch. He is competent, capable, and practical.

Dr. Julia Hernandez – (30s/40s/50s) Head of the Theatre Department, but displaced by Robert. She is an ardent feminist. She is also traumatized by an experience of sexual harassment by a teacher in her university years. Passionate, high-strung, intense, and intelligent. She is vehemently opposed to Robert's takeover of the theatre department.

Kyle Bushnell – (30s/40s/50s) Sarcastic but down to earth faculty member. He is more concerned with getting along, keeping his job, and not rocking the boat more than philosophies, visions, and ideologies.

Cedric Johnson – (20s) Male student.

Rochelle Williams – (late teens/20s) Female student.

The Set

The set can be minimalistic. It takes place in a home living room/office, a black box theatre, a classroom, outside in the woods, and in faculty offices. Blocks for chairs and tables can be used. Everything else can be implied.

Synopsis

Dr. Robert Bellamy, an academic heavy-weight, but mediocre playwright is hired to take over as head of the Sojourner Truth University Drama Department, located in Atlanta, GA. It is a traditionally African-American, all-girls college that has recently become co-educational. He is a traditionalist and classicist and fundamentally opposed to feminist and minority theatre for which the drama department is known. He is a devotee of Yale academic Harold Bloom, a famous literary critic. He is against political correctness for political correctness' sake. He wants to create a theatrical Romantic Movement and plays with Shakespearean traits and values. He also deeply craves success. He is assisted by his loyal wife, Katia, and his coconspirator in the takeover, John Kane. Robert and John plan to fund and run an Arts Center at the university that will bring it prestige. He is opposed by displaced Department Head Dr. Julia Hernandez, an ardent feminist traumatized by sexual harassment by an idolized teacher in her undergraduate years, and Kyle Bushnell, a faculty member. But all is not well in the Bellamy household, as Robert's propensities towards workaholism, frustrated romanticism, and failing marriage display the cracks in his life. The takeover of the theatre department does not go well and his latest play seems headed for failure. He becomes obsessed with a student called Olivia. She inspires him to write a successful play and become a better person, one that really represents heroic Shakespearean values.

Production History:

A staged reading at Compass Theatre, 2009 in San Diego, CA.

Scene 1

(The home of ROBERT BELLAMY. ROBERT is in his study/living room talking on the phone. A desk and chair, seats and coffee or side table should be implied.)

ROBERT

I tell you Marty, this is it. My latest play is finished and ready to go. *(pause)* Well, I know the last one flopped and the one before that but Marty, will you at least read it? Marty? Marty? *(hangs up phone)* Katia!

(Enter KATIA)

KATIA

Robert, what is it?

ROBERT

My agent hung up on me.

KATIA

Again?

ROBERT

He says it's been twenty years since I've had a successful play. Has it been that long?

KATIA

Yes dear. Your first play was produced in 1970 and it's 1990.

ROBERT

He doesn't even want to bother reading "The Ironic Wars." He has completely given up on me.

KATIA

Maybe it's time to look for another agent. *(doorbell rings)* I'll get the door. I bet that's John. He can give you so much better advice than I can.

(KATIA Exits into the foyer)

(Enter JOHN KANE)

JOHN

Morning Katia. You are looking lovely today, as always. *(She smiles)* Where is he?

KATIA

In the living room.

JOHN

How is he?

KATIA

Don't ask. You know how he gets with new plays. All flustered and excitable. Well? How is Robert's play?

JOHN

Now it is my turn to say "don't ask".

KATIA

Oh no John. That bad?

JOHN

The worst to date!

KATIA

Is it unsalvageable?

JOHN

Not if he throws it away and starts all over.

KATIA

Oh, hush now. You are terrible. There must be something that can be done. Help him John. He is in a vulnerable position right now. He is under so much pressure. Seriously John what were we thinking?

JOHN

What do you mean?

KATIA

Coming here! I warned him about taking this job. Did he listen to me? No! And for what? To be given the cold shoulder by the faculty at the theatre department? Those people are making our lives hell!

JOHN

I would not call that bundle of middle-aged militants a "faculty".

KATIA

To think that he was offered a job at Princeton University.

JOHN

Why didn't he take it?

KATIA

He felt that he could have a greater influence in a small, traditionally black, liberal arts college. President Collins really wanted him and offered him carte blanche with the theatre department.

JOHN

Being promised an Arts Center also sweetens the deal.

KATIA

Yes, it does. He has so many plans for that Arts Center. I just don't understand why the theatre faculty have to see him in such a negative light.

JOHN

Believe me there will be a few heads rolling in that department.

KATIA

Although, I do admire Julia Hernandez, she is so brilliant and clearly committed to her beliefs.

JOHN

That radical? She is the worst of the bunch!

KATIA

Come on dear, he is waiting for you anxiously. Drop it to him gently.

JOHN

Katia, for you I will tell him he is the next Shakespeare.

KATIA

Great dear, whatever it takes.

(Exit KATIA. JOHN Enters the study. ROBERT is in the middle of a yoga pose/exercise)

ROBERT

John, come in, come in. Sit down.

JOHN

What are you doing?

ROBERT

These exercises help me get ready for writing. I need to do some last minute revisions. *(relaxes pose)* So tell me. How are things?

JOHN

Things are good. I like my new apartment. I'm finally settled in, all furniture arrived safe and sound. Who would have thought I would ever leave New York? For Atlanta, Georgia of all places! Still, there comes a time when a change is good.

ROBERT

Oh I agree! Change is good. Change is what you and I are going to bring to Sojourner Truth University!

JOHN

Yes we are!

ROBERT

That is what the faculty at the Theatre Department can't seem to get through to their heads, John. They have been running the program like a barnyard theatre—and the plays they choose! Good god! Can we get any more obscure and experimental? There is nothing wrong with a few feminist and minority plays, but that is not all there is. I am a firm believer in diversity, but there needs to be quality. We need the Canon! They need a moral vision. I plan to give it to them.

JOHN

(Has heard this too many times before) Oh yes...a moral vision.

ROBERT

These students are getting to act but they are not getting the experience of performing in a top -notch production with real professionals. I plan to change all that.

JOHN

Are you sure President Collins will follow through on funding your arts center?

ROBERT

He is very supportive of my vision. Sojourner Truth University is going to have the most sophisticated Arts Center in all of Atlanta. This small, liberal arts college will lead the way to the greatest Romantic Movement the American theatre has ever known. Artists from all over the world will perform here, and students will work and learn with them. All you need is to do a little fund raising, pull at your connections and keep track of the money.

JOHN

Will do.

ROBERT

Now let's get down to the main business. What did you think of my new play?

JOHN

Well, all I can say about "The Ironic Wars" is....it needs some work.

ROBERT

What about the plot, the characters?

JOHN

The characters are a bit two dimensional and pedantic. The plot is unrealistic and drags and the actions are unbelievable. Too many metaphors and symbols. But your message....oh....it comes across.

ROBERT

Does it really?

JOHN

Yes. Loud and clear.

ROBERT

Well, that's a start.

JOHN

Yes.

ROBERT

Is it that bad?

JOHN

Yes, it's pretty bad.

ROBERT

Perhaps a few more revisions?

JOHN

Miracles do happen.

(Enter KATIA with a tray. She serves herself and John a cup of coffee. She offers one to ROBERT but he has drifted to the corner lost in thought. She turns to JOHN. They quietly laugh and talk, ignoring ROBERT)

ROBERT

(speaking to them so softly that they cannot hear) Oh how they laugh at me. I am, above all, a Shakespearean scholar. Romeo and Juliet, King Lear, Hamlet...they are my constant companions. I am traveling with a very good crowd. I despise what passes for "theatre" in present-day America. I loathe contemporary plays. Whiny, narcissistic, psychobabble with no beginning and no end. I plan to change all that. That I am a mediocre playwright is a bit of a challenge, but nothing that can't be overcome with hard-work, charisma, and above all: power.

Scene 2

(*JULIA's office at the theatre department. JULIA and KYLE are having a private meeting.*)

JULIA

This is a hostile takeover of our theatre department.

KYLE

It's not our theatre department anymore Julia.

JULIA

What can we do about it?

KYLE

Oh I don't know my dear. Offer him some lubricant and beg him to be gentle. There is nothing we can do about it. We are going to be screwed, regardless. He is department head now.

JULIA

Why did they bring this arrogant, pompous, clueless *bufoon* to come in and dismantle everything we have worked so hard for?

KYLE

Because he is a big name in academia with big connections, which translates into big bucks. He does have an excellent track record as a teacher. His publications on Shakespearean drama are excellent.

JULIA

His plays stink!

KYLE

Not all of his plays. I kind of liked the first one. It was pretty good.

JULIA

He does not support feminist and minority theatre and we are a traditionally black, all-female university! What the hell is he doing here?

KYLE

We were all-female...we have been fully integrated now for several years. Have you not noticed those creepy, crawly male students roaming around?

JULIA

President Collins is infatuated with him. BA at Yale, Ph.d at Cambridge! Whatever.

KYLE

Envious are we?

JULIA

Hey, there is nothing wrong with Alaska State University! I got a perfectly good education there.

KYLE

No comment.

JULIA

The man is a phony....

KYLE

No matter. He is a 600-pound gorilla.

JULIA

Its all about the money for the arts center isn't it?

KYLE

You got it! His ideas on theatre are so archaic, so old-school. When I hear him go on and on about Shakespeare, and the classics, and the Greeks, I get dizzy.

JULIA

Our department is about promoting avant-garde minority and feminist theatre! How in the world could *he*, of all people, end up here, as head of our department? This is an absolute nightmare.

KYLE

Did you hear his spiel on left-wing, politicized liberal playwrights? (*mocking*) That all the “whining and finger pointing in our contemporary theatre is created to make up for the lack of intellectual substance and moral values”?

JULIA

Such pretentiousness! Us? No morals? No values? We fight for the rights of minority playwrights to be heard! I have to do something. He can't get away with this.

KYLE

What are you going to do?

JULIA

I don't know. What about our Female Playwrights Scholarship Program? We are just getting that under way. Do you think he will be supportive?

KYLE

Only if the female students write in Old English.

JULIA

How about our LGBTQ theatre intensive?

KYLE

I'm not sure he would be up for the Plato and Aristotle Drag Show we had in mind.

JULIA

Oh dear. We will come up with something. Right now we gave a meeting to go to. We don't want to be late now do we?

KYLE

We sure don't.

Scene 3

(The Black Box Theatre. JULIA and KYLE are speaking to the students. CEDRIC and ROCHELLE are listening.)

JULIA

Hello everyone, and welcome to the first student-faculty meeting of the fall semester. I am Dr. Julia Hernandez, and I teach feminist performance art, script analysis and playwriting. I welcome you to the theatre department at Sojourner Truth University.

Sojourner Truth has achieved a great reputation for our socially progressive, all-inclusive approach to theatre. It has always been our mission to give voice to the artists that society has traditionally pushed to the sides. Women's theatre, Latino and African American theatre, Gay and Lesbian theatre, and international theatre focusing on the third world; that is our passion.

(ROBERT BELLAMY and JOHN KANE have slipped in the back and are watching the rest of the proceedings.)

KYLE

I am Kyle Bushnell. I teach directing, movement for the stage, and tech. We are so excited to have you here and to get to know you all of you. We hope to become a theatrical family.

ROBERT

Well said Kyle. I could not stress a better point myself. Hello everyone. I find it a bit surprising that the first student-faculty meeting would be conducted without me, the department head. Julia? Any reason for this? Am I not part of the family?

JULIA

My apologies. We left a memo with your secretary. You didn't get it? We just assumed you chose not to attend since this is an unofficial meet and greet.

ROBERT

Not attend? I would not dream of doing such a thing. *(pause)* Make sure it does not happen again. Now please, would you introduce me?

JULIA

Of course. *(pause)* Students, this is the distinguished professor of Drama and Literature, Dr. Robert Bellamy. He has just joined us this year, replacing me as Department Head. He teaches playwriting and dramatic literature, and has written several "well received" plays.

(ROBERT and JULIA exchange glances)

Robert?

ROBERT

Hello students, fellow faculty members. I am Dr. Robert Bellamy, and this is John Kane, arts administrator. *(John nods)*. You have come to our theater department at a great time. We have great plans for this university, exciting projects. First of all, we have received the go ahead to commence with the building of a multimillion-dollar arts center right next door to our little department. Great artists will come and perform right next door to you, and you will earn credit by working as extras on their productions.

JULIA

Excuse me, Dr. Bellamy. If the students are working as free labor, I mean “extras” on big name productions, when will they have time to act in their own shows?

ROBERT

The small amount of time that will be taken away from student productions will be more than made up by the rich exposure they will receive to “successful” professionals in the world of theatre!

KYLE

Really? Then what “successful” playwrights are scheduled to visit?

ROBERT

We will have a variety of professionals come visit, teach and perform at our new center. Now if I can only finish...

KYLE

With all due respect Dr. Bellamy, but it seems like a big arts center would benefit the university more than it would benefit the students.

ROBERT

(To students) Excuse us, please.

(He sends a signal to JULIA to end the meeting)

JULIA

Students, get off to class. Meeting is over. Thank you for coming. Don't forget! Auditions for Romeo and Juliet Deconstructed are tomorrow.

(Exit CEDRIC and ROCHELLE)

ROBERT

Julia...Kyle. I understand that you are upset. But if you will just give John and I a chance, I really believe we can achieve great things here. I care about the students. I happen to think that this new arts center is a great idea. And with you, or without you, I will see it through.

(Exit ROBERT)

JULIA

Well, that went over well.

KYLE

I don't know. I think we may be getting in over our heads. Maybe we should just go along with it. Why would Collins fund the project if he didn't think it's a good idea? Let the man have his arts center! Keep him happy!

JULIA

Yes. Let the man have his arts center so he can put on his lousy plays and make our students work for free on his productions. His latest play is slated for production in our Black Box Theatre.

KYLE

Oh really?

JULIA

Yes, the world premiere of "The Ironic Wars."

KYLE

Sounds positively Hellenic.

JULIA

Don't you see? It's all about him! I think we should have a talk with President Collins. If he wants to go ahead with the arts center that is his choice and we can respect that, but we need his word that the students' education won't be compromised, that there....

JOHN

You mean that your jobs won't be compromised.

JULIA

This is not about us. It is about the students and protecting their rights and about keeping the correct vision for the theatre department.

KYLE

Excuse me, but I have been working here for ten years, and unlike Dr. Bellamy I have not been granted automatic tenure. I have two poodles to feed and I would not mind a little security in the job department, thank you very much.

JOHN

I don't see the reason why everyone can't come out of this a winner. There is no need to make a fuss with Collins, no need to create a cause with the students, and if you play your cards right, no need to fear for your job security. Let's handle this like adults. This arts center can be a lucrative business, and I am sure that a share of the profits can come right back to the theatre department, to the benefit of everyone. In fact, why don't we head on over to my office and I can explain some of the finer details of the plan?

(They all look at each other and nod in agreement.)

(Exit JOHN, JULIA and KYLE. Enter CEDRIC and ROCHELLE)

CEDRIC

Check them out! They are fighting like cats and dogs around here.

ROCHELLE

It is disappointing, isn't it?

CEDRIC

I don't know why they just can't get along. They are all amazing teachers, and Dr. Bellamy, man, his lectures just blow you away. I'm in his Romantic Vision class and I'm loving it. He is one cool dude. *(pause)* Are you a theatre major?

ROCHELLE

Yes. I'm a freshman.

CEDRIC

I'm Cedric. I'm a senior. Going to graduate this year with my B.A. in Theatre Arts. I like acting, but I want to be a director. That's my passion. How about you?

ROCHELLE

Rochelle. I want to act. I love theatre. It took a while to convince my parents to let me major in it.

CEDRIC

I'm paying for my college so they don't have a say.

ROCHELLE

I had a really cool teacher in high-school, she recommended this school. She told me if you are a minority, gay, or a feminist majoring in theatre this is the place to be.

CEDRIC

It is the place to be. We're not bad for a bunch of drama geeks. I just hope the faculty comes to its senses, man, and decides to get along. Dr. Bellamy is a great teacher. They should just let him do his thing, you know, just back off.

ROCHELLE

The arts center he mentioned, what is that all about?

CEDRIC

Just the best thing to happen here! He wants to put his university on the map! In a big way! The other faculty, well, they feel, like, here comes this big dude with a Yale degree ready to take over! They are really threatened.

ROCHELLE

Really? Are they jealous or something?

CEDRIC

A little. It's just that he's not really into modern drama. He thinks plays needs to go back to the style of the old days.

ROCHELLE

The old days? How old? Like fifty years ago?

CEDRIC

No, I think like 400 years ago.

ROCHELLE

What for? Shouldn't contemporary drama be representing what is happening today?

CEDRIC

I don't think he wants to change the style, just the themes. He wants to bring romanticism back. Heroes and Heroines.

ROCHELLE

Really?

CEDRIC

Yes, he will blow your mind.

ROCHELLE

I'm signing up for his class then.

CEDRIC

Yea, we can sit together. Hey you want to go get some lunch?

ROCHELLE

Sure. You can fill me in on whose class I should take!

CEDRIC

Oh yeah! First of all, Bushnell is a royal pain in the behind! Take his movement for the theatre later in the day because he will be tired and not make you work so hard. Julia is a total earth biscuit. Still in the sixties, you know what I mean? She comes across kind of tough but she's cool.

Scene 4

(Robert's study/living room.)

KATIA

Sure Marty, I understand. I will definitely let him know. *(pause)* Well, it's not something he has not handled before. *(pause)* It's much better that he hears it now from you than from the critics on opening night. Now at least he still has time to salvage it. *(pause)* I will. Thank you, Marty. Goodnight.

(Enter ROBERT)

KATIA

How was the meeting?

ROBERT

(comes in, takes off jacket, walks around)

Very enlightening.

KATIA

Are they warming up to you?

ROBERT

I wouldn't go that far. Did Marty happen to call?

KATIA

As a matter of fact, he did.

ROBERT

Bad news? *(She nods her head)* I don't understand it Katia! I have written and rewritten those scenes until I barely recognize them any more. What could possibly be wrong with them now?

KATIA

He says the characters are too unrealistic.

ROBERT

Then what the hell do I have to do to make them come alive? Sell my soul to the Devil? I would, but unfortunately, he is not making any offers!!

KATIA

Robert...you are a brilliant teacher and academic. You have had one moderate success that made it to off- Broadway, and two well-received plays.

ROBERT

That did not go beyond regional theatre.

KATIA

You are a respected scholar. That is so much more than most people accomplish in their lifetimes. Why can't you be satisfied? What is it that you want?

ROBERT

Well, I sure don't want to be a "one moderate success" kind of guy. That amounts to being a failure.

KATIA

Why? Why does being a "moderate success" amount to being a failure? Do you want astronomical success? Tony-award winning, cover of People magazine, let's make a million-dollar movie success?

ROBERT

Yes. I do. Is there something wrong with that?

KATIA

Of course not. But there comes a point when you have to accept your limitations!

ROBERT

Do you know what the rumor is now?

KATIA

What?

ROBERT

That the only reason I came here is for the Arts Center. So, I could put on my plays at the Arts Center because no one else will.

KATIA

Ridiculous!

ROBERT

Is it really?

KATIA

You believe in your mission, just like I do. If your plays don't succeed, we will find the plays that will but there is a Romantic Movement on the way!

ROBERT

(sad) If my plays don't succeed...

KATIA

Is that the only thing that will make you happy?

ROBERT

Am I a failure, Katia? Because sometimes I sure as heck feel like one. I just want to scream at the unfairness of it all. Why would God give me the desire and then refuse to satisfy it?

KATIA

I don't know.

ROBERT

Creating a modern-day Romantic Movement is not easy.

KATIA

I know dear.

ROBERT

You seem sad. Is everything alright?

KATIA

I would be happy with just a night out, the two of us, at the little Italian restaurant down the street. How about our own Romantic Movement? When was the last time we went out on a date? Life can be so unfair to adorable, unrecognized heroes like yourself. I say you come with me to the bedroom and maybe we can conjure up a bit of romance on our own. What do you say?

ROBERT

Darling. You go ahead. I'm going to work on the play for a bit, but I will be there as soon as I finish. I promise.

Scene 5

(Robert's office at the university. Enter JULIA, she is carrying a packet of plays. ROBERT is at his desk.)

ROBERT

Hi Julia, thanks for stopping by.

JULIA

I needed to drop off the plays for the Feminist Festival anyway. Here they are. *(she places them on his desk)*

ROBERT

Thank you. I will get right on it. Julia, the reason I asked you to stop by is because I think we have started off on the wrong foot.

JULIA

I would say so.

ROBERT

And I want you to understand where I came coming from. My beliefs.

JULIA

I think I understand perfectly. You don't like minority and feminist theatre and I do.

ROBERT

I care about minorities and I care about women. I just don't care about bad, low-quality theatre. How is producing work that is sub-par going to help anyone?

JULIA

Just because it is not to your taste, does not make it sub-par. Minority and feminist theatre are "of the moment". This is Our Time. Our thoughts, our tastes. This is contemporary drama.

ROBERT

When I was a student at Yale, I studied under Harold Bloom. Amazing professor. World-renown literary critic. He warned us about this movement away from Literary Criticism and into Multicultural Studies and the Social Justice Movement. Do you know what Multicultural Studies really is? It's the politics of Resentment.

JULIA

With good reason. There is a lot to be resentful about.

ROBERT

Oh, please let's leave the political correctness at the door. We are talking about ART. How do we measure its value? Only on its identity politics?

JULIA

Political Correctness is to contemporary drama, what Romanticism was to the 18th century. It is the spirit of our times. Don't dog it because you don't like it. You guys had your time.

ROBERT

There is a Canon for a reason! There are geniuses that time and scholars have decreed are the brightest and the best and we are not teaching them anymore.

JULIA

The Canon? The Canon is just a bunch of DEAD, WHITE, MEN!

ROBERT

I don't discriminate against race or gender and neither should you.

JULIA

How dare you mock me? Thousands of years of oppression and now that we get a chance to speak you want to send us back to the Renaissance?

ROBERT

NO. I want to create a new Renaissance. Where race and gender and politics don't matter. Where genius is genius and great art is great art and people are inspired. We need a Vision.

JULIA

And you don't think multiculturalism has a vision?

ROBERT

Feminists, deconstructionists, multiculturalists they are choking the humanities programs with their left-wing cultural agendas and pushing severely inadequate and low-quality writing just BECAUSE they writers are minorities! They are completely ignoring the amazing works of literature that have inspired us throughout time. Where are the Shakespeares and Miltons and Dickens of today? Modern writers have no interest in aesthetic values! The canon offers us a vision that the human soul needs. We need excellence. We desperately need it.

JULIA

Oh, let me guess. Like the vision in your plays? This is all about you. Show me some excellence in your plays and then let's talk. Goodbye.

(EXIT JULIA)

Scene 6

(The Black Box Theatre. Everyone is busy like bees from a beehive, doing their bit. JULIA is rereading the script. KYLE is moving props. CEDRIC and ROCHELLE are to the side rehearsing lines. JOHN and ROBERT are talking.)

JOHN

Hello everyone. I am John Kane, producer for the play in progress –THE IRONIC WARS- written by our own playwright in residence and department head, Dr. Robert Bellamy. I am honored to be here tonight at this playwriting workshop and looking forward to seeing all of your hard work. Please don't mind me. Let's proceed. Julia, it's all yours.

(JOHN and ROBERT sit to the side. KYLE sits to the other side. JULIA gets up to direct the scene. CEDRIC and ROCHELLE come forward)

JULIA

Listen up everybody. We are in Act II, scene 5. This is the play's climactic scene. Cedric will be playing the Demon of Irony that has overtaken America. Rochelle you will be Grace, the heroine determined to destroy it and restore America to an Age of Romanticism. We want you all to pay close attention, so we can figure out what can be improved. We need everyone's input on this. Let's take it from the top!

(They read with the script in their hands.)

DEMON

(Monster-like) I am the Demon of Irony and the entire Western world belongs to me! Grrrr. I fill it with Despair, Violence, and Talk Shows.

GRACE

You will not win.

DEMON

I take away your hope and your dreams.

GRACE

My higher moral values will overcome you.

DEMON

I kill your higher level thinking skills! GRRRR.

GRACE

How?

DEMON

I give you the simplicity of violence and ideology!

GRACE

I am going to hit you with a Shakespeare book! That'll teach you!

DEMON

Shakespeare can't defeat me!

GRACE

I will hit you with a Greek philosophy book then!

DEMON

Plato or Aristotle?

GRACE

Plato. I'm not take any chances.

DEMON

I will minimize your mind and give you hopelessness.

GRACE

Die Demon! (*She hits him with the book.*)

DEMON

Make you blind to life's glory.

GRACE

You nefarious Demon get away from America and the Western world!

DEMON

Ouch that hurt!

GRACE

We don't like you, you poopy-head! Get out of our collective unconscious! Now!

DEMON
Is that a hard cover book?

GRACE
Snotty Demon!

DEMON
You could have used a paper back.

GRACE
Die Demon, die!

(The Demon falls. She hits and kicks him.)

Yeah! Die, fart face! Don't come back around here! *(pause)* Hey, he's dead. The western world is saved, thanks to me.

(End of that scene.)

JULIA
Comments anyone?

(complete, prolonged, uncomfortable silence)

ROBERT
(To John) John, they are speechless. Mesmerized by my brilliance! Fascinating to watch. Look at the amazed looks they have in their eyes.

JOHN
Indeed.

ROBERT
Did you notice how I included "normal" language in the rewrites? Poopy-head? Fart-face? I felt that was just the needed touch.

JOHN
That's not exactly what I had in mind.

ROBERT
Just like you told me. I need to connect with the masses.

JOHN

Seems like you are connecting more with your gases.

ROBERT

What great advice John! I think finally I can write like “one of the common people”.
(laughs) What about that!

(John looks at him and shakes his head)

JULIA

Any other comments, ideas, whatever? *(pause)* No? OK, then let’s take a 15 minute break!

(They disperse within the room to have private conversations among themselves)

(Exit CEDRIC and ROCHELLE)

KYLE

That was the playwriting workshop from hell. Well? What do you think?

JULIA

What do I think? *(incredulous)* The man has a B.A. from Yale, M.A. from Princeton, and a Ph.d from Cambridge and he writes like an overzealous middle-schooler!

KYLE

He certainly lives in a world of “make believe.”

JULIA

Yes. He makes believe that he can write! This is ridiculous! Kyle, I have a play in my office that I am dying to workshop! The playwright is an African woman from Sudan, who was beaten by every man in her village because she refused to marry the man chosen for her. She just wanted to live in peace, alone with her goat. She walked across Africa to get to freedom; barefoot, naked and bleeding!

KYLE

Oh dear, did the goat go with her?

JULIA

The goat was put to death by the villagers. It became a stew.

KYLE

Oh, that’s a shame.

JULIA

During the day she walked and at night she wrote about her ordeal. She did not have a pen SO SHE USED HER OWN BLOOD AND A TWIG ! (*close to hysteria*)

KYLE

How did she get paper?

JULIA

Kyle! How do I know how she got paper! Maybe she wrote on leaves or something. That is beside the point. That play is sitting on my desk right now! And I have to workshop this..this *monstrosity* from this pretentious, obnoxious dimwit?

KYLE

You got it.

JULIA

And when is "The Ironic Wars" supposed to be ready?

KYLE

We want it up by spring.

JULIA

And this is going to bring publicity to the Theatre Department?

KYLE

That's what they say. I mean, this must be a pretty great school if it produces a hit from one of its own faculty members!

JULIA

A hit? The play stinks! We will be the laughing stock of academic and artistic circles. He is ruining my theatre program! I'm in charge here!

KYLE

Correction. You were in charge here.

JULIA

Oh my God, don't remind me. I can't take it Kyle! I am going to have a nervous breakdown! I will not be taken seriously among my friends in feminist circles if I have anything to do with this play!

KYLE

(laughs) It's okay. They need to lighten up a bit. Oh dear, I see an attack of eczema coming on.

JULIA

Oh no...am I getting red?

KYLE

Yes, I see little bumps everywhere. You know how you get when you are stressed.

JULIA

(hyperventilating)

I can't breathe.

KYLE

Oh dear. An asthma attack? *(Julia nods)* Where is your albuterol? *(She points to her purse and he grabs it.)* Come on; let's get some fresh air before you pass out.

(KYLE and JULIA Exit)

ROBERT

What did you think?

JOHN

It's getting better. Overall a good workshop. I took some notes that I will give you tomorrow. Now, go home to your lovely wife. Remember her?

ROBERT

Who? Sorry I didn't catch what you said.

JOHN

Go home Robert!!! Get some rest!

ROBERT

I can't rest at a moment like this John. I'm too full of energy.

JOHN

Alright then, go home and stand on your head in yoga poses or do whatever you want. I give up! Good night.

(Exit JOHN. Enter OLIVIA)

ROBERT

Hello.

OLIVIA

Hello.

ROBERT

I'm Dr. Robert Bellamy.

OLIVIA

Yes, I know. I am Olivia.

ROBERT

Are you part of the playwriting workshop?

OLIVIA

I am. I got here a little late. Sorry. I sat in the back. A very interesting play.

ROBERT

Thank you. Are you taking this workshop for credit?

OLIVIA

Yes. I am also in your Romantic Vision class.

ROBERT

You are? How could I not notice you? Nice to meet you.

OLIVIA

Yes. This *is* the time for us to meet, isn't it?

(Exit OLIVIA)

ROBERT

"This *is* the time for us to meet?" What did she mean by that?

Scene 7

(ROBERT is lecturing in the classroom. OLIVIA, CEDRIC and ROCHELLE are listening to the lecture. There is a chalkboard with a big circle. North is the word Romance, east the word Tragedy, south the word Irony, west the word Comedy. If there is the possibility of a video screen this image could be projected.)

ROBERT

Throughout time, literature has reflected society and society has reflected literature. The power of words, is the power to create, to transform and to destroy. It is the power of God himself. In this class, Romantic Vision and Modern Drama 101, we will study contemporary American theatre, and analyze, what is the vision presented and reflecting contemporary American society? What values are reflected in our drama, a mirror, where we can see ourselves? It is time for a change, a rebirth before it's too late.

OLIVIA

(Raises hand) What happens if we don't change our style of drama and literature?

ROBERT

Our society will decline, degenerate, lose energy. Like the great empires of the past, we will become a memory of what once was and is no longer. Shakespeare wrote mainly romances, tragedies and comedies, but only a few ironies.

(CEDRIC and ROCHELLE get up, come DOWNSTAGE and act out his ideas as he speaks, reflecting what ROBERT is saying. OLIVIA is the only one sitting. He talks only to her.)

According to Northrop Frye, esteemed Canadian academic, in a Comedy two lovers meet, but there is an obstacle to their love that they must overcome. Comedy is "Journey's ended and lovers meet". A comedy is a journey from law to liberty. It brings the community together. There is marriage, fertility, and it takes place in the spring. Think of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Nights Dream* or *All's Well That Ends Well*.

(CEDRIC and ROCHELLE act this idea out.)

In a Romance, the hero has magical powers. He is on a mission, a goal and must overcome certain insurmountable obstacles in order to succeed. In Romance, the hero is unusually effective. An example could be Hercules, Achilles, Robin Hood or Jesus Christ, the ultimate lover...of God.

(CEDRIC and ROCHELLE act this idea out)

Tragedy, on the other hand is a journey from liberty to law, the opposite of comedy. The hero or heroine is doing just fine, but life tests them severely and usually due to a fatal flaw in their character or in those around them, they fail the test. The one important thing they do achieve is: recognition of their mistake. Tragic heroes that come to mind are Oedipus, and King Lear.

(CEDRIC and ROCHELLE act this idea out)

(suddenly furious) Irony on the other hand is symbolized by barrenness, death, fences, limitations, insanity, and lack of recognition because you are this race, or that sex, or this economic class, or multiple genders, or mentally ill, or you are missing three fingers. Forget trying to be a hero, forget overcoming serious difficulty. What have you learned?

Modern contemporary drama is mostly ironic. Some plays that come to mind? Death of a Salesman, Buried Child, Fences, The Gender Wars, The Night of Meaningless Sex, Suicide Alley, Addiction, how much more are we going to take?

(CEDRIC and ROCHELLE are twirling faster and faster, like lifeless puppets)

In an ironic play, alcohol and drugs fuel the actions, there is casual meaningless sex, no babies are created, or if they are; they die, the lovers do not find each other, obstacles can't be overcome, and there is no recognition. Irony destroys, and ultimately, it kills. Irony says...life is meaningless!

(CEDRIC and ROCHELLE fall to the ground)

We are living in the age of Irony. Irony is everywhere. On the television screen, in our movies, our books, our music, our arguments, our philosophy and our political discussions. It is the enemy, hopefully to be overcome.

(CEDRIC and ROCHELLE sit up. LIGHT floods the stage)

That is why in my next class we will study mainly Shakespeare. What are the moral values in Shakespeare? Could we apply those values to our lives in any way? That is all for today, students. See you next week.

(CEDRIC and ROCHELLE get up and walk out whispering and buzzing with excitement. OLIVIA stays behind. ROBERT goes about his business of collecting his papers. She slowly walks up to him, entranced.)

ROBERT

Yes?

OLIVIA

Dr. Bellamy, I don't have words to describe how you made me feel. It was just amazing.

ROBERT

Glad you liked it.

OLIVIA

Where do you think Irony originated from?

ROBERT

Irony has always existed. Literature has four modes: Romance, Comedy, Tragedy and Irony. But in the 20th century Irony flourished, eclipsing all other modes.

OLIVIA

Why?

ROBERT

Societies throughout history have always fluctuated between the high and the low. In western culture you had the brilliant Greeks and to a lesser extent, the Romans, and then the Dark Ages; the spiritual awakening of the Italian Renaissance, and the introspective seriousness of the Reformation; the tranquility of the Rationalists and by the mystical frenzy of the Romantics.

OLIVIA

So society is always changing?

ROBERT

But now, we are in The Age of Irony. And nobody seems aware of it. I've never seen anything like it in my study of historical trends. It is slowly killing us as a society.

OLIVIA

What can we do?

ROBERT

Turn the tide.

OLIVIA

There has to be a reason for so much irony. What is it about the 20th century? Is it so bad?

ROBERT

Maybe. I think the genesis was in the 19th century around the beginning of the industrial revolution in England, with its ensuing emotions of alienation and the conflict between man and machine. The creation of weapons of mass destruction in World War 1 and 2 alienated and terrified man. The influence of Marx, Nietzsche, Freud. The Lost Generation” in Paris in the 1920s.

OLIVIA

I've heard about The Lost Generation.

ROBERT

All those tortured American and foreign expatriates like Hemingway and Scott Fitzgerald and painters like Picasso, and later Dali. Paris was a hotbed for anarchists and atheists, cubists, and nihilists. They proclaimed that life is meaningless with their paintings and their novels and their plays.

OLIVIA

But they were great painters and writers!

ROBERT

You can be a great artist and Ironic! But what happens when all art is ironic? When that is all we see?

OLIVIA

I guess one can become...lost.

ROBERT

Exactly. This sense of irony flowered in the sixties, and the ensuing sense of entitlement, irresponsibility and satiety with the young. The feminist and civil rights movements were a much needed corrective action in society, but the residue can be toxic.

OLIVIA

What residue? What do you mean “residue”?

ROBERT

Out of the sixties came the literary institutionalization of “victimology”. The term now used is Identity Politics. Now is the time to leave the rage aside. To leave racism, sexism, and every other “ism’ as the never ending subject of our drama, and literature.

OLIVIA

Are you saying that writers should not write about sexism and racism?

ROBERT

Not at all. I am saying that if the subject is racism and sexism then use a romance, comedy or tragedy story form. Not an irony.

OLIVIA

What if a story is best told as an irony?

ROBERT

Irony brings hopelessness.

OLIVIA

But sexism and racism bring hopelessness too.

ROBERT

We need a new way of thinking beyond the endless finger pointing. Othello was black. Shakespeare did not revolve the plot around this “blackness.” He revolved it around his humanity. His volcanic, exquisite, and murderous love.

OLIVIA

His tears were those of a man, not a “black” man.

ROBERT

Yes. Yes. Do you see where I am going with this?

OLIVIA

Yes. I do.

ROBERT

Did Juliet whine about the unfairness of being a woman in a patriarchal society, or was she still strong and effective, doing what needed to get done in order to consummate her love for Romeo?

OLIVIA

She was strong and effective. But, what if Juliet would have preferred going to college and not interrupt her education with her father telling her who to marry or Romeo making her fall in love. If she had not been so restrained she might have a great career instead of dying like she did.

ROBERT

Alright, then write a comedy, romance or tragedy about Juliet going to college, not an irony!

OLIVIA

Ok. I get what you are saying.

ROBERT

To add the cherry on top of the cake, then we had the plague from France that swept through American academia like wild fire. Derrida and his “brilliant” theory of deconstruction.

OLIVIA

Deconstruction?

ROBERT

He basically says that all great literature can be broken down into political, sexist and racial components. It is all a ploy by dead white guys to exploit the masses!

OLIVIA

Is that not true, to a point?

ROBERT

Writers have always been a product of their times, but it does not take away from the greatness of their work. Study Shakespeare. He is the key. We need a balanced view.

OLIVIA

But doesn't that view help you?

ROBERT

What do you mean?

OLIVIA

You are male. Your voice will always be heard.

ROBERT

My race and my gender have nothing to do with my writing.

OLIVIA

Dr. Bellamy, so many times in history, women and minorities were silenced. No one helped them or encouraged them to get published. Why is it wrong for them to tell their story the way they see it?

ROBERT

Here we go again. I better get going now. I have a meeting to go to. Goodbye.

OLIVIA

Goodbye.

Scene 8

(JULIA'S office at the theatre department. Enter KATIA)

JULIA

Yes?

KATIA

Hello Julia. Do you have a minute?

JULIA

Mrs. Bellamy. Of course I do. Come in.

KATIA

Thank you. I came to see my husband and thought I would drop in and see how things are going.

JULIA

They are definitely going. Just not sure where.

KATIA

You have a wonderful department here. I really admire what you have done with it.

JULIA

I've worked very hard to get it to this point. Hopefully it will remain so.

KATIA

Julia, my husband would kill me if he knew I was talking to you.

JULIA

I can imagine.

KATIA

I wanted to tell you that we both really admire you and your work. I know this transition has been hard. But, my husband is a good man. Underneath all the eccentricities and academic façade lies a dedicated scholar with a sometimes, obsessive vision who is utterly convinced that he is doing the right thing.

JULIA

Men are always doing the “right thing”, for their visions, their ideas, their projects. When do we get a voice?

KATIA

I know Julia.

JULIA

For ten years I have worked in this department and put on the plays of women playwrights, and minority playwrights. Voices that are rarely heard outside of academia. And yet, President Collins decides, without consulting me in the least, that he is going to go out and hire a man who is the complete ideological opposite of everything I stand for.

KATIA

I’m sorry. We did not realize that my husband’s ideas would be so anathema to you.

JULIA

I came here and helped take this from an obscure minority college to a regionally respected university.

And now after it is big enough to achieve national recognition, then we call the Big Shot Guy to take over. When are we ever given credit?

KATIA

My husband had no say in this decision. President Collins reached out to him.

JULIA

You have no idea how tired I am of this bullshit.

KATIA

Actually, you would be surprised.

JULIA

It never ends. Even as a student I had to deal with these men.

KATIA

What do you mean?

JULIA

As a freshman I took a class from a superstar professor: Terence Blossom. He was a famous author, or so he said. My world changed. For the first time in my life, my mind was on fire. He was an amazing teacher. And then tragedy struck. He hit on me! I didn't want that! And I did not take him up on his offer. Still, I didn't want to believe it was happening. I wanted to learn from him so badly that I put up with it. I couldn't give him up as a teacher. I was terrified and overwhelmed.

After one of his male colleagues made a snarky remark to me, I realized Dr. Blossom had talked about me to him. They had shared locker room talk about me! I was livid. I was 19 years old! My reputation in this department meant the world to me. I marched right up to the Theatre department to try to talk it out with him. But I had so much pent up anger that I burst into a faculty meeting and started to scream. When Dr. Blossom saw me yelling at the top of my lungs he panicked.

KATIA

What did he do?

JULIA

He called the campus police. They dragged me right out of there and threw me out the door like a sack of potatoes.

KATIA

Unbelievable. First, he hits on you then calls campus police?

JULIA

Once outside, campus police asked me what had happened and I said two words "sexual harassment." Suddenly their tune changed. They were all over that and wanted names. I would not give them any.

KATIA

Why not?

JULIA

Because by then I cared.... about Dr. Blossom. I didn't want to ruin his career.

KATIA

You made a big mistake not reporting him.

JULIA

Trust me. If I had to do it over again, I would. He, on the other hand, threw me to the wolves. To protect himself he said that I was a mentally unbalanced student with a crush and that I was harassing him. I became an outcast at the theatre department. My grades declined. The fire in my mind died. I left and transferred to another college.

KATIA

Shameful. And to think...you paid good money for this "education."

JULIA

Tell me about it. I'm still paying the student loans.

KATIA

Have you thought about getting some therapy for this trauma?

JULIA

I don't want therapy! I want justice!

KATIA

What made things better for you?

JULIA

It never gotten better for me. I have been playing catch-up ever since. College is the time when a person is launched into the world. Where contacts are made, professional reputations forged. I lost my scholarship, I had to transfer to a lower ranking school, I lost my way and my dreams. It has taken me a very long time to find them again and I am not going to let another Dr. Blossom come in here and destroy everything I have achieved.

KATIA

Robert won't do that.

JULIA

Katia, I appreciate you talking with me. But I allowed myself to be walked upon too many times before. I am not sure that I am willing to do that again.

KATIA

No one is asking you to.

JULIA

Thank you for stopping by.

KATIA

Take care Julia.

Scene 9

(ROBERT'S Classroom)

ROBERT

I will close today's class with a song from Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, in honor of youthful love.

“Oh mistress mine! Where are you roaming?
O! stay and hear; your true love's coming,
That can sing both high and low.
Trip no further pretty sweeting,
Journey's end in lovers meeting
Every wise man's son doth know.

What is love? Tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
What's to come is still unsure,
In delay there lies no plenty,
Then come kiss me sweet-and-twenty,
Youth's a stuff will not endure.”

That is all for today, students, See you next week.

Scene 10

(The woods. OLIVIA is sitting on a picnic blanket, by a lake on campus in the outskirts of the university. ROBERT walks by, he has unconsciously been looking for her.)

ROBERT

Oh, hi. What a surprise meeting you here. I don't usually come this way, but I decided to take the long way to the parking lot today. Such a nice day. It's kind of secluded out here in this wooded area.

OLIVIA

Why don't you sit down with me?

ROBERT

Well, why not. It's not always that I get a chance to talk to my most mysterious student.

OLIVIA

Mysterious?

ROBERT

I don't even know where you are from.

OLIVIA

(silly) A land far, far away.

ROBERT

Is that what it says in your passport?

OLIVIA

(laughing) Why yes it does.

ROBERT

I must visit there sometime.

OLIVIA

It is a land like no other.

ROBERT

I will take your word for it.

OLIVIA

Dr. Bellamy, why do you want to bring the genre of Romance back to American theatre so badly? Why do you care so much?

ROBERT

People are dying without it. I am dying without it. (*pause*) It is the Spirit of our Times. The Zeitgeist. Thousands of years ago, in the times of Jesus, people saw miracles everywhere, because that was the spirit of their times. But now...what do we have now? Talk shows about strippers who don't know their baby's daddy.

OLIVIA

What's wrong with that?

ROBERT

Not to discriminate against strippers, it's just that...

OLIVIA

I'm just kidding. You really love Shakespeare don't you?

ROBERT

He is the reason that I write. The reason that I live. (*pause*) When I was a young student at Yale I was playing rugby one day with my friends. I fell and knocked my head against the ground. I passed out. When I woke up the first thing I saw was this Mickey Mouse pen sticking up from the earth in front of my eyes.

OLIVIA

A Mickey Mouse pen? Were you hallucinating?

ROBERT

No, I really did see it. I guess someone had stuck it there to be funny. But, behind the pen, in the horizon, was a Shakespearean troupe, putting on a play, faraway in the park. With my blurry vision, the actors seemed like little magical creatures, dancing around the pen. I picked it up walked right out of the rugby field and headed towards the park. I watched the show that afternoon. It was Romeo and Juliet. I have never left.

OLIVIA

So you live in Shakespeare's plays more than reality?

ROBERT

Probably. I wrote my first play with that Mickey Mouse pen. I teach.... That there once was a man named William Shakespeare, a man who captured divinity with his pen. Don't ever settle for less. There is something better, beyond what this sick, pitiful world has to offer. (*embarrassed*) I don't know why I am telling you this.

OLIVIA

We all need a friend to talk with once in a while.

ROBERT

And a very good friend you are indeed. (*getting up*) Well, I better get going now. It was a delight to talk to you. Until next time.

OLIVIA

Dr. Bellamy?

ROBERT

Yes?

OLIVIA

Have you ever had a Great Love?

(*Exit OLIVIA*)

Scene 11

(ROBERTS's home. ROBERT and KATIA are reading and having tea.)

KATIA

How is your tea, dear?

ROBERT

A little too sweet.

KATIA

Really? I only put one tea spoon of sugar, like you requested.

ROBERT

It's fine.

KATIA

Maybe I need to switch to brown sugar.

ROBERT

(absentminded) Humm? Oh yes, brown sugar.

KATIA

Perhaps that will take the edge off the sweetness.

ROBERT

(Ignoring her) Every time I re-read Romeo and Juliet, I am amazed.

KATIA

Are you? You must have read it a thousand times...what are you amazed at?

ROBERT

The balcony speech. That a girl so young, so pure, could feel love so great, passion so strong. She is a dream isn't she?

KATIA

Is she? There are many women that love like her. Some of them are right under your nose. Does a woman in love have to be a teenager to be a dream?

ROBERT

(laughs) Of course not, my dear. And I am sure Juliet could not make a cup of tea as sweet as yours.

KATIA

Touche. *(pause)* Robert, we need to talk.

ROBERT

(absentminded) Talk? About what? I already said the tea was fine. I need to prepare for tomorrow, for my Moral Vision class

KATIA

It's not about the tea.

ROBERT

(finally looks up from the book) What do we need to talk about?

KATIA

About us. About why you come home every Wednesday with grass stains on your clothes and later than usual. People have seen you in the woods. People are talking. What is this sudden interest in nature my dear? I hear that you go there after every class.

ROBERT

(nonchalant, going back to his reading) You shouldn't listen to the idle gossip of bored faculty wives, Katia.

KATIA

You are never home any more. You are always late. And....the other night..... you called out to a girl's name in your sleep.

ROBERT

Katia, I get my kicks above the waistline. (*pause*) I am not unfaithful to you. I never will be. You are enough for me.

KATIA

Perhaps not physically. But mentally you have been unfaithful plenty of times!

ROBERT

Oh, so mentally I have been unfaithful? And you haven't? You never think any man other than me is attractive?

KATIA

But I don't go on about it like you. You dive into your attractions, you drown in them. You become obsessed.

ROBERT

I have become preoccupied, in the past, but only mentally, my dear. Only mentally. I get inspiration from many sources.

What do you want me to do? Only write about happily married couples that don't have any problems in the world? That doesn't exactly make for very exciting drama you see!

KATIA

Oh so I bore you is that what you're saying?

ROBERT

Katia, you can't put shackles on my mind. If I cannot be free to think as I please, to write as I please, then I do not want to live at all.

KATIA

You have had crushes on your students before. Is that what is going on here? Are you meeting a student in the woods? You keep saying you haven't slept around, but how do I know?

ROBERT

You can't Katia! You either believe me or you don't. All I have ever wanted to do is to create and create....as much beauty as I can see around me...to capture it on paper in my own little paradise. Sometimes I meet someone, who inspires me, who opens up unknown passages within myself. And I reach out to them. Only mentally.

Katia. I worship you. What more do you want? What can I do to make you happy?

KATIA

Want me. Like you want them.

ROBERT

Like I want the characters in my own mind? How can anything compare? (*He takes her hand gently and kisses it.*) The perfect woman only exists in the realm of the imagination. Reality is always imperfect, always a disappointment. I can live in reality but don't deny me my dreams, my plays. (*pause*) Katia, I idolize you. You are above everyone else.

KATIA

(*Takes her hand away from his.*) Then take me off that pedestal and take me to bed. It is damn cold up here, where you have placed me. And you have placed me here, alone, to watch from a distance as you frolic "mentally" with the ones you really want. The ones who "inspire" you.

ROBERT

I'm sorry Katia. I can't. I have work to do tonight.

KATIA

You can't? Or you "can't" with me?

ROBERT

Don't start this again. You know how tired I have been.

KATIA

You said you would go to a doctor about this problem. It's been months since we have been intimate. Many months!

ROBERT

Katia, I am really not in the mood to talk about this!

KATIA

Of course you aren't! You are never in the mood for anything involving me! What do I have to do Robert to get you to love me? Become a teenager again? One of your students? Transform into Juliet?

(*She grabs the Shakespeare book and throws it across the room in a rage*)

What????!!!!

Scene 12

(The faculty meeting room. JOHN is holding up an image for the finished Arts Center. JULIA, KYLE and ROBERT are present.)

JOHN

And this is the final design agreed upon by the committee and President Collins. Quite impressive, isn't it?

JULIA

When will construction begin?

JOHN

Next month. But the Arts Center is not the only exciting plan. Robert? *(He sits)*

ROBERT

(standing up)

Yes, well, in addition to the Arts Center we plan to create a resident theatre company composed of paid professionals that will perform in the theatre space we already have. They will be called the Bellamy Players.

JULIA

Are the students going to get a chance to act in these professional productions?

ROBERT

Maybe in minor roles.

JULIA

How many season performances should we expect from the Bellamy Players?

ROBERT

About three.

JULIA

A year?

ROBERT

No, per semester.

JULIA

Robert? What about our students? We can only handle so many shows per semester. If we take up the black box theatre with the Bellamy Players, then where are they going to perform?

ROBERT

I was thinking the room adjacent to the Black Box theatre would be a perfect performance space.

JULIA

You have got to be kidding! That small room hardly serves as a classroom! We can barely use it as a rehearsal space now!

ROBERT

I think it will do just fine for student productions for the time being. I promise they will get their own space soon enough. Also, this is the proposed list of plays for student production. I wanted to run them by you to see what you thought.

JULIA

Wait a minute! I've already chosen and approved the plays that students will put on this year. It was my last action as Department Chair. (*She looks at list*) None of these people are on my list. I have one female playwright and two African American playwrights chosen and ready to go. Goretha Hakumba has already agreed to come and workshop her play.

ROBERT

Goretha Hakumba likes to get naked on stage and slap her self with bloody T-Bone steaks!

JULIA

Goretha Hakumba is demonstrating how women are perceived as pieces of meat to be consumed in this patriarchal society!

ROBERT

Goretha Hakumba is a few sandwiches short of a picnic! She is a nut case and her work is trashy! Julia please be reasonable.

JULIA

Don't talk to me about work that is trash! You are the last person on earth that should be talking about that!

ROBERT

Feminist writers are too dark, too personal, and too sexual! It makes the audience uncomfortable.

JULIA

Well I'm sorry Robert, but being raped, molested, and harassed is not exactly a comfortable experience!

ROBERT

You have ISSUES!!

JULIA

WHAT IF I DO?

ROBERT

(Purposely trying to speak calmly) Julia, I sympathize with what you are trying to do. I know you mean well. But a writer needs to transcend the personal in order to tap into the universal.

JULIA

(Losing it) Oh yea? I tell you what I am going to do. I am going to transcend my behind right out of here and pray that this is all a bad dream. Because you two are ruining everything that I have worked for, that I believe in, and that I stand for!

KYLE

Julia, please calm down it! You know how stress exacerbates your eczema. You will be a red and itchy mess tomorrow.

JULIA

No Kyle! It is not enough. I want to know that my job is not in jeopardy.

KYLE

Robert, do you have any insight into the situation?

ROBERT

The truth is I don't know, I'm sorry.

JULIA

That's a bunch of crap! You do know. What fancy big name professor is going to come and take my place, Robert?

KYLE

What happens, happens! I hear the junior colleges are hiring. We can start again. Julia, you are losing it. This is not the way to handle this.

JULIA

You have certainly changed your colors on me lately. What's in it for you? Huh? Are you the one they plan to keep?

KYLE

(holding on to his cool) I really resent that insinuation. Julia, we have to know when to give up. I am so tired of fighting. Can we just get along for just one meeting?

JOHN

Julia, whatever happens in regards to your teaching position, the committee is the one...

JULIA

The committee! The committee is eating out of your hands. You two run the show!

ROBERT

This is intolerable. Get out! You know what? You are right about a lot of things, because if it were up to me, you would be out on the street holding a "Will teach for money sign."

JULIA

Great! Now that I know the truth, we will see who is out on the street first, you or me!
Good day!

(JULIA Exits)

JOHN

Well, so much for getting along.

KYLE

I don't know what to say, guys. Tensions have been running high around here lately. I know she can be a pain in the rear end, but she means well. She really does. She just...gets stressed. I better be heading out I have class.

(Exit KYLE)

JOHN

Robert, we need to get rid of that woman.

ROBERT

I don't want to talk about this at the moment.

JOHN

You are going to let her stick around after the way she treated you?

ROBERT

For God's sake John! I took over her department. She has a right to be upset. Let's give it some time.

JOHN

You're on your own with that one.

ROBERT

By the way, I liked the list of artists you have lined up for the Arts Center except one.

JOHN

Who?

ROBERT

Harry Kramer! We don't need the likes of him in the Arts Center.

JOHN

What? Harry Kramer is the most successful playwright in America at the moment!

ROBERT

Kramer is a foul mouthed, inarticulate broken sentenced moron who just happened to capitalize on this century's obsession with irony and I don't want him coming within a five mile radius of my Arts Center. In fact, I have a mind to ban ALL twentieth century playwrights and put on only Shakespeare....and my plays.

JOHN

You have got to be kidding!

ROBERT

(mocking) I have never been more serious about anything in my life.

JOHN

You made me leave my cushy job in New York so I could run an Arts Center that will feature only YOUR plays and a dead guy from the three centuries ago? You can't do this to me. It won't work!

ROBERT

(laughs) I'm kidding! I'm kidding! *(pause)* John, you have known me for 20 years. What have you been thinking all of this time, when you heard me speak about Irony and how much I hated it as a literary form? This is not to further my interests. You never understood me, my friend. To you everything is still about money.

JOHN

What did I think when I heard you dribble on about irony for twenty years? I thought that is sounded damned good for your classroom and the bunch of post pubescent fanatics that believe all of your bull, but it sure as hell won't make any money for the Arts Center! It won't work. We also need to put on plays that are popular now!

ROBERT

It will work. It's my Arts Center and don't forget that you came here to help me get it underway.

JOHN

Oh yeah? Well there is one thing you really need to get this underway. A hit play! You need to finish "The Ironic Wars" and it better be good because your credibility and mine are riding on it! When is it going to get done?

ROBERT

You know what? You and Katia are really two of a kind! You both suffer from the same lack of vision sometimes!

JOHN

One thing is for sure, if she had married me, she would never have a reason to wonder where I am, or what I am doing.

ROBERT

What the hell are you talking about?

JOHN

Oh come on Robert. She told me everything.

ROBERT

Everything about what?

JOHN

That you are having an affair with some student.

ROBERT

I am most certainly not having an affair with any student. I can't believe she would tell you that. John, say what you need to say about the theatre department...but don't bring my wife into it. Do you understand?

JOHN

Oh I understand alright. See you around.

(Exit JOHN. Enter JULIA)

JULIA

You do know that having an affair with a student is not allowed at Sojourner Truth University.

ROBERT

Excuse me?

JULIA

I heard everything. I was just outside the door.

ROBERT

You need to leave now....

JULIA

Other universities don't mind if professors get involved with students that are not enrolled in their classes, but we don't allow any romantic involvement until a student is no longer enrolled in the university.

ROBERT

....before I call security to escort you out.

JULIA

Did you just threaten to call campus police on me?

ROBERT

I did. You have exactly five seconds to leave before I call them.

JULIA

If you are having an affair with a student you could get fired.

ROBERT

1, 2, 3, 4, 5....ok, you asked for it. *(picks up phone)* Could I have security escort someone out of the theatre department faculty meeting room please? Thank you. *(hangs up phone)*

JULIA

AAAAAAGGHHHHHHHH!

(Julia loses it and screaming lunges after him, jumping piggy back on his back and trying to choke him. He tries to get her off and they go round and round, finally crashing on the floor, where she finally releases him while he grasps for air. Self-satisfied she gets up and dusts herself off.)

No need. I will escort myself out.

(EXIT JULIA)

Scene 13

(The Woods. ROBERT and OLIVIA are talking)

ROBERT

Olivia, I need to apologize

OLIVIA

For what?

ROBERT

For spending so much time with you. It is inappropriate. Even though nothing has happened between us, I can't say the thought has not crossed my mind. A lot.

I have enjoyed your companionship so much you see. Talking to you reminded me of the person I used to be. Of the reason I started to write in the first place. But, it is creating problems in my life, with my wife, my job. People are talking. I can't ruin my marriage and my career over this.

We can't meet in the woods anymore.

OLIVIA

I am sorry I didn't know this was causing so many problems for you. I thought we were friends.

ROBERT

We are friends, but my life is falling apart. All my dreams seem futile. Nobody wants me here, no one wants my plays. Everyone thinks I'm a jerk. I obsess about changing contemporary drama...but maybe I can't.

OLIVIA

Maybe what you need to change is inside yourself.

ROBERT

What do you mean?

OLIVIA

Robert there is always a way to make things better with people. What would a Shakespearean hero do?

ROBERT

He would be effective.

OLIVIA

Maybe you could take your wife on a trip to a romantic place and make her feel that she is as special as your plays and your books and your visions. Maybe you can compromise with Julia and let her put on some of the plays she wants to put on. Isn't being a hero doing what is best for others?

ROBERT

I thought being a hero was creating a successful play that inspires.

OLIVIA

Maybe you can inspire others by being a real friend and listening to their points of view.

ROBERT

You are right.

OLIVIA

I am?

ROBERT

Yes. I need to do better. Be better. I have been a blind, egotistical, stubborn fool.

(He sits on the ground, placing his head on his hands, defeated. OLIVIA walks over and pats him on the shoulder.)

OLIVIA

Robert, I think you are ready now.....

ROBERT

Ready? For what?

OLIVIA

(hugs him tenderly and kisses him on the forehead) Goodbye Robert. I love you very much.

ROBERT

See you next week in class.

Scene 14

(CEDRIC and ROCHELLE are practicing their lines at the Black Box)

CEDRIC

Rochelle, concentrate on your lines or we are never going to get an A in acting class.

ROCHELLE

I'm sorry I'm not feeling it.

CEDRIC

What's up you have been in a funky mood all day!

ROCHELLE

I feel bad.

CEDRIC

About what?

ROCHELLE

About Dr. Bellamy. His play really sucks.

CEDRIC

Yea, it does. I was thinking the same thing.

ROCHELLE

When were in that workshop and he's all excited about it, I just want to say...dude you need to fix this play it's never going to work but I don't want to hurt his feelings.

CEDRIC

I know. It sucks because he's such a great teacher...but The Ironic Wars is not where it needs to be.

ROCHELLE

Hey I have an idea. What if we rewrote the play for him?

CEDRIC

Say what?

ROCHELLE

We're both in playwriting class. We have a ten-minute play due in a few weeks. Why don't we write something and show him how to do it? Maybe inspire him you know?

CEDRIC

Yeah, why not. I'm sure writing a play can't be that hard and we have to do it anyway.

ROCHELLE

Let's try it! Want to meet in the library later and get to work on it?

CEDRIC

Let's do it!

Scene 15

(A faculty office. KYLE is sitting taking notes. Enter JOHN)

JOHN

How are you doing?

KYLE

Hanging in there. I can't believe what is happening. Such a toxic environment. I shouldn't have messed with something I couldn't handle.

JOHN

Well, the same could be said of me.

KYLE

What do you mean?

JOHN

Robert has been acting like a real bastard lately. And I have a feeling that If I don't do exactly what he says regarding the Arts Center, I will be as history as Julia.

KYLE

Is she out? For sure?

JOHN

Contract won't be renewed. It's definite. President Collins wanted big names for the entire department. That was not entirely Robert's doing.

KYLE

But he could have fought for her to stay?

JOHN

Why would he?

KYLE

Oh no. She is going to be crushed! She loves this place. What about me?

JOHN

You're safe for another year. I will probably be out before you.

KYLE

What are you saying? Did you two have a falling out?

JOHN

We have different visions about where the Arts Center should go, as far as performers. He is looking into replacing me, I fear.

KYLE

Not a chance! How can you be so sure?

JOHN

Oh, I'm sure. *(pause)* I just got off the phone with a mutual friend from New York. He asked if I had any plans of moving back up there soon. I said "I have no intentions of living in that hellhole, Marty. I like Atlanta just fine." He said, "Well, I heard from Russell that you would be back in New York pretty soon."

KYLE

That doesn't mean anything.

JOHN

I bet you he is already asking around for a replacement for me. People are talking.

KYLE

Well, join the club.

JOHN

You will follow.

KYLE

All this mess over a fanatic with a little power!

JOHN

I wouldn't call it a "little" power. Not in this case. He has Collins wound up around his little finger so tight I'm surprised he doesn't follow Robert around in a leash licking his big toe, he is so convinced he is the next Shakespeare! Collins even boasts that Robert Bellamy will probably win a Tony Award for his play! All the more glory for Sojourner Truth University!

KYLE

Great! Then we're in business! The play will flop, he will look like a fool. He might reconsider keeping us on.

JOHN

I wouldn't be so sure.

KYLE

It's a thought.

JOHN

There is no justice. Not with Robert. He always manages to get what he wants. He once took something I wanted. I lived with it. Now, I want this Arts Center. It was going to be my legacy. I was going to make it work. He wants to take that too. I've had enough!

(JOHN starts to walk out.)

KYLE

John, what are you going to do?

JOHN

Take what's his for a change!

Scene 16

(Robert's home. KATIA is sipping tea. Enter JOHN.)

JOHN

Hello....? The door was open. Am I too early?

KATIA

No, you are right on time, as usual. Sit down. *(He sits)* Do you like sugar in your tea?

JOHN

Yes please. Two teaspoons as usual.

KATIA

How can I forget? We have a sweet tooth now, don't we?

JOHN

Always have. *(pause)* How are you doing Katia?

KATIA

I am alright John. Thanks for asking.

JOHN

I hate to see you unhappy.

KATIA

That's very kind of you to be so concerned.

JOHN

Katia, stop pretending you don't know how I feel about you. I have never stopped loving you. I will never love another woman like I love you.

KATIA

Why are you telling me this now John? What we had was over decades ago.

JOHN

Not to me. I know you are not happy with Robert. I know it. I have accepted your marriage to him and he is so blind he doesn't even see that I still carry a torch for you, but how long are you going to be with him? He is not there for you Katia. All her cares about are his plays.

KATIA

It feels like that at times.

JOHN

Is he still seeing that student?

KATIA

I don't know John. In fact, I am not sure about anything.

JOHN

What do you mean?

KATIA

I am tired of competing with other women, be them real, or literary. I am tired of competing with visions, causes, dreams and plays.

(pause) You spend your life trying to hold on to a man. Massaging his shoulders, massaging his heart, massaging his ego. You primp and pluck and nip and tuck and diet. You try to create a beautiful home, be a perfect wife, a loving mother. And for what John? For what? You might as well try to catch the wind. Even if you have him in body his mind is someplace else, with someone else. It is too late for me. I have made my bed and I must lie in it. No matter how cold it is.

JOHN

It is not too late for us.

KATIA

My sweet John. *(kisses him on the forehead)* You are a charmer. I will keep that in mind my dear.

JOHN

(sipping his tea) Katia, I know this has nothing to do with anything...but did I ever tell you that you make the most, absolute, perfect cup of tea?

(Her eyes light up and she smiles. He smiles back with a twinkle in his eyes)

(smiling) Actually John, you are the first person who has ever told me that.

(They lift the cups in the air to each other as in a toast and sip at the same time.)

Scene 17

(ROBERT's faculty office. Enter JULIA.)

JULIA

You asked to see me.

ROBERT

Yes. I did. Please take a seat.

JULIA

Let me guess. Because I think I know what you are going to tell me, and I would rather be standing for what I have to say.

ROBERT

Oh?

JULIA

You have brought me here to gloat. You win, I lose. Isn't that how it always goes for people like you?

ROBERT

Well...

JULIA

You get to destroy my department with your old-fashioned ideas that have nothing to do with today's values, and are a lot more about stroking your fragile ego and making sure no one else gets a piece of the pie.

ROBERT

Actually..

JULIA

Well let me tell you something - your time is up. You can fight it all you want and maybe I lost this battle but we will win this culture war. Women and minorities and LGBTQ ...we are here to stay and our vision, our perceptions, our ideas will be heard and there is NOTHING you can do about it in the long run!

ROBERT

Julia, I wanted to tell you how sorry I am that things have gotten so out of hand. That was never my intention.

JULIA

Come again? You are apologizing to me?

ROBERT

You have worked so hard to create a theatre department that you believe in, that promotes your vision of how best serve the students.

JULIA

I have.

ROBERT

Perhaps I have been too obtuse, too closed in on my own vision. I am thinking that maybe we could meet somewhere in the middle. Maybe we could promote some of the plays that you feel are important and also some of the plays I feel are of value.

JULIA

I would really appreciate that, but I hear my time here is almost over. You might have to do that with the next teacher you hire.

ROBERT

Nothing is set in stone yet. I can vouch for you. If you are willing to work with me and hear me out, then I can do the same for you. We can make this work.

JULIA

Why the sudden change?

ROBERT

I was inspired by a friend of mine. Someone who reminded me of why I fell in love Shakespeare in the first place.

JULIA

Hmmm. That is a good friend! I need to meet this person. Wow. I don't know what to say. I really appreciate this.

ROBERT

Well then, truce?

JULIA

Truce!

ROBERT

Good. I say let's schedule another meeting, where we can figure out all the details of our coming productions, and talk about the space for the resident company and the student productions.

JULIA

Will do. Thank you. Perhaps, I have been unfair to you too. I misjudged you. By the way, I really did like your first play. It was brilliant.

ROBERT

Thank you. Twenty years ago, I wrote “Rebirth in America” with my vision in mind. It was successful and I was thrilled. But it fell into obscurity. Later on, I saw playwrights I felt were less talented than me, succeeding commercially with plays that were based on Irony, sex, drugs, crime, profanity. I was envious. These playwrights were being courted by Hollywood, living it up in the limelight, while I slaved away teaching. It ate me up inside. As soon as I let envy into my heart, I lost my muse. I could not write anymore. Everything I wrote, failed.

JULIA

Your muse?

ROBERT

Yes. My inspiration. I decided right then and there that I would rise again. That I would succeed no matter what the cost. That my entire life would be devoted to the single minded purpose of writing a commercial success...and my vision fell to the background.

JULIA

Is your muse back?

ROBERT

No. But I refuse to drag you down with me because I am a failed playwright.

JULIA

Does it really matter that much Robert?

ROBERT

It shouldn't, should it?

JULIA

Maybe when you truly get back to your vision, your muse will return. Maybe she is just waiting for you, for you to turn to her.

ROBERT

Yes, maybe. I hurt you. I hope that you forgive me. As a symbol of my friendship I want to give you something.

(HE hands her a pen)

JULIA

A Mickey Mouse pen?

ROBERT

But it's not any Mickey Mouse pen! It's a special Mickey Mouse pen. I wrote my first play, "Rebirth in America" with this pen. Now it is yours. You are a playwright too.

JULIA

I use my computer to write my plays.

ROBERT

Keep it anyway. For good luck.

JULIA

Thank you, Robert.

Scene 18

(Black Box Theatre. CEDRIC should be dressed as a rapper, with very baggy pants, oversized shirt, gold chains, and a sideways baseball cap. ROCHELLE should be dressed in sexy clothes. They are going to present a surprise play for Robert.)

(Enter ROBERT)

ROBERT

Alright, here I am!

CEDRIC

That's so cool you came Dr. Bellamy. We have a very special surprise for you!

ROBERT

I'm on pins and needles.

ROCHELLE

Yea, we wrote a ten-minute play for our playwriting class and we want to put in on for you!

ROBERT

Really?

CEDRIC

Even better, we want you to be in it. To read a part.

ROCHELLE

You inspired us to write it.

ROBERT

Well, I'm honored.

ROCHELLE

Here Dr. Bellamy, your script. You get to be "Pusher".

ROBERT

Pusher. Alright. What do I need to do?

CEDRIC

Just stand to the side and follow the stage directions.

(ROBERT moves to the side.)

We are going to take it from the top.

CEDRIC/DEMON

Yo yo yo I'm a flower that's not the garden variety, I thrive on dissin society
I like to cancel women, they all just b's and ho's, They call me the Demon of Irony
You may be dumb, but you're not blind, No matter what you do, they're out to get you,
Right on your behind, you can't succeed, so smoke some weed
Keep a pumpin that (bleep), Keep a pumpin that (bleep)

Just walking down the street can get you arrested, but I'm putting it down with my AK47,
it's tested, I've been out of school, for like six semesters, got no degree
But in the holding tank, I'll get my GED

(CEDRIC and ROCHELLE) I'm the Demon of Irony, I'm the Demon of Irony
Look at me, Don't you see, I'm the Demon of Irony

ROCHELLE/DEMON

Even though I'm not your girl, check yourself, I'm a special flower
Look into my eyes, baby boy, you can't deny I've got sexual power
You know I gotta be something, my phone's always ringing
It's all my babies' daddies, wanting my sweet potatoe pie, its addicting

They say I'm a B and a Ho, I believe it, don't you know?
I'll rock with you, maybe get to know you, but you always move on, your love isn't true
So I sit and wait, sit and wait, getting ready for my next bad boy date
My babies are crying, my babies are dying; I hate my babies, they belong to men who are lying

At least give me some weed, or maybe a little cash, It's the least you can do since you tapped that a--
My strung out momma screams "Get your degree!, I know better, I'm getting mine,
A man's gonna resolve my life for me, I'm the Demon of Irony.

(The Demons laugh and adlib flirty comments with each other. They should be drinking from a bottle and passing it.)

ROBERT/PUSHER

Hey, what's going down? You want to get high?

CEDRIC/DEMON

You know it! What you got?

ROBERT/PUSHER

It's a new drug called SMV...better than crack....want to try it?

CEDRIC/DEMON

How much?

ROBERT/PUSHER

For you it's free.

CEDRIC/DEMON

For real? Hand it over.

(ROBERT gives CEDRIC and ROCHELLE the drug and they take it. They go into spasms, falls to the floor, like they are undergoing a transformation. They get up transformed.)

CEDRIC/MAN

What did you say this drug is called?

ROBERT/PUSHER

SMV. Shakesporean Moral Vision. It's s an old drug. It's been around for years and years, just been out of circulation. Do you like it?

CEDRIC/MAN

I've never felt this high, never seen such things.

ROBERT/PUSHER

What do you see?

CEDRIC/MAN

I see people walking in chains, blood on their bodies, pain in their souls, I see them surviving, working, their spirits soaring, their hearts breaking, I see giants, GIANTS, the ripping, roaring, power of their spirits among their crushed and tortured bodies.

ROCHELLE/WOMAN

I am standing on their graves, I am nursing on their blood, and I am a GIANT, a GIANT, nothing can stop me; nothing but myself! No matter how low a person can go, no matter what they do to my mind, my body, my soul - no matter how alone, how abused, how forgotten. I will get myself up and I will soar again.

ROBERT/PUSHER

Soar, baby, soar!

(The End of that Play)

(ROBERT applauds. CEDRIC and ROCHELLE bow.)

ROBERT

That was a darn good play!

ROCHELLE

We have been working on this for weeks. I think we are going to get an A in the class.

CEDRIC

For sure we are getting an A.

ROBERT

Thank you for inviting me to come see it and sharing it with me.

ROCHELLE

You inspired us.

CEDRIC

We want to give something back to you.

ROBERT

(touched) Thank you, it means a lot to me. Really. You don't know how much I needed this.

CEDRIC and ROCHELLE

Group hug! Group hug!

(They huddle and hug)

ROBERT

You are helping to turn the tide. You both are heroes. Romantic Movement heroes.

ROCHELLE

Yey! Romance!

CEDRIC

Romantic Movement here we come!

Scene 19

(ROBERT's study. He is alone writing)

ROBERT

I don't understand. Olivia has not attended my class in weeks. I am beside myself with worry. What's happened? Is she upset because I did not want to meet her in the woods anymore? Where could she be?

Its past midnight, I have to finish this play, but I can't think. Olivia, where are you?

(He falls asleep)

ROBERT

(Waking up) Oh.my back. What a headache. What's that noise? Katia is that you?

(Enter OLIVIA in a green fairy youth outfit and a green cap on her head)

Olivia? What are you doing ...dressed liked that ...in my living room... at three o'clock in the morning? Where have you been?

PUCK

Puck at your service, milord.

ROBERT

Puck?

PUCK

Yes, I have traveled all the way from a Midsummer Night's Dream to serve you. I will woo your muse, as I wooed Tatiana for ...

ROBERT

My muse?

PUCK

Yes, I hear the writing muse she has deserted you in your most troubled time of need. Alerted by Olivia, your most loyal friend, I came running from Shakespeare Land to help you in your plight. You are most beloved there, and in high honors does Will hold you sir, for you have furthered his cause as pollen would a bee, infecting flower after flower with his canon and his word.

Oh Woe is me, if I did fail you in this worthy cause, if that be the case no longer would I dare show my face within the Masters' Court but linger in this horrid place, a lonely fugitive. So dear sir, shall we begin?

ROBERT

Begin? Begin what?

PUCK

To write, dear sir, to write! Bring out your pencils and your pens, that heaven's words may flow upon the page, for with my service at your pencil point, there is no chance your aim shall miss the target. I am instructed in poetry and letters, as all of Will's creations are taught to be. It is we who are real, not this, and we await you when your hour approacheth; for what you dream or feel in your heart to be, shall be when the world no longer holds its shape or form.

In death you'll know, what in life you only dared to dream: It is known in the land beyond that Shakespeare and Robert Bellamy are twice in form, but in Spirit they are one.

ROBERT

(Laughing) Oh I see! So Olivia...I mean Puck, let me get this straight. William Shakespeare has sent you to help me to write this play? And Olivia? What does she have to do with all of this?

PUCK

Olivia...she doth love you milord.

ROBERT

(Whispers to himself) Doth love me.....? *(pause)* What would she have me do then?

PUCK

Your heart will tell you what to do. A truer friend no man could wish to have. Now, if you allow me, together we may write a work blessed by Master Will, if not exactly pure as his can be. But pure enough to help defeat that dreaded Irony, before it lingereth too much longer on this plane.

ROBERT

Puck, thank you. Thank you. This is all very...overwhelming.

PUCK

We have no time to lose, if you should fail, the Wrath of Will will fall upon your head and Irony will triumph, and lay your cause to rest!

ROBERT

I am sure the Wrath of Will is not to be taken lightly. When you go back to Shakespeareland, send him my love. Tell him I can't wait to meet him. Now, let's get to work.

(ROBERT looks around the room and finds a stack of loose leaf paper and a pencil. ROBERT and PUCK sit on the floor and they begin to write.)

Scene 20

(Robert is holding his new play. The pages are bound with green ribbons. He skims through it amazed at the changes. He then drops it like it burned his hand.)

ROBERT

If I had ever doubted there was a God, or that God was indifferent to my foolish, failing cause; it became clear to me that I had been mistaken. It was an act of utter faithlessness not to believe that the *Almighty cares!* That one's pathetic little life can bring miracles and bear precious fruit, even from such a twisted tree as I. Why did he bring his magical being, Puck, to help me in my dreams?

She said Shakespeare wanted to meet me, because I've been such an advocate for his writing. *(picking up the manuscript and lifting it to the heavens)* And to top it off, here I had it. My play perfectly rewritten. Written with God's helper for the sole purpose of helping me, Robert Bellamy, fulfill my mission here on earth. *(shaking, he picks up the manuscript and looks up to heaven)* Moses holding the Ten Commandments on the Mount could have felt no greater joy than I did, that fated day, as I passed out my new and improved play.

(The Black Box Theatre. ROBERT is holding manuscripts that he passes out to JOHN, KYLE, KATIA and JULIA. They all read them and buzz around the room with excitement. They alternate between reading and silently talking to each other)

ROBERT

(To the staff) I want to extend an olive branch to all of you. We are starting again with a clean slate. We will work together to make this a theatre department and arts center that we can all be proud of. That includes all of our visions and gives validity to all of our different views.

In addition, I appreciate all of your help and your input with "The Ironic Wars." Show opens in a few months. Let's knock them dead!

(KYLE, JULIA and JOHN nod their head)

(To the audience) They loved my new and improved play. "The Ironic Wars" was a bona fide hit they all assured me and they were right. A resounding success.

KYLE

Robert, I really enjoyed your play. Very inspirational.

ROBERT

Thank you, Kyle! (*pause*) My life became a whirlwind of activity. Lectures, press meetings, traveling to premieres in different cities. Finally, Broadway came on board.

JOHN

Great play. This is taking you straight to the top!

KATIA

Robert, guess who called me on the phone today? Meryl Streep. Said she saw your show last night and she loved it. She wants us to go to dinner with her and her husband! Oh...I have nothing to wear. I need to go shopping. Imagine...Meryl Streep.

ROBERT

Here I had it. What everyone strives for: the absolute attainment of one's dreams. Could there be anything sweeter?

Yes, there could. Because, you see.... inside I was *dying*. I longed to see her face. To hear her voice. After that night, when she came to me in my dream as Puck, I never saw her again.

The unforgettable sweetness of what had started between us - and the pain of its interruption - was not eased by my success in the world. The love that had gripped my heart was not an ordinary love. Olivia was my special, perfect friend. And so, I put on a brave and happy face to this whore of a world that so loved me now; while inside I pleadingly longed for my Olivia, my Juliet, my pure and innocent child. What did I need to do to see her again?

And then...three years later, a miracle happened.

JULIA

Robert, the Sojourner Truth University Student Players wants to put on a second production of "The Ironic Wars" at their Black Box Theatre as a benefit event for their incoming freshman class. It will be acted and directed by students. Are you interested?

ROBERT

Of course, I am. Anything for the incoming freshman class.

(Exit JULIA)

ROBERT

It was an exciting affair, my play coming full-circle. By now, its success was well-established, and here it was, right where it started. Nostalgia enveloped me. I should have known the Almighty had something else in store for me. If I secretly felt myself to be a prisoner, the promise of liberty was tangible in the air for me that night.

JOHN

Ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the anniversary production of the hit play, “The Ironic Wars”. It is an honor to have you here today. Now, here is the man of the hour, a very special man, our very own playwright, Dr. Robert Bellamy.

ROBERT

Thank you all. This is a very special night for me. Because this is the night that I am going to speak my truth. All of my adult life I have pursued goals at the expense of the people around me. I spoke about Shakespearean values, but I was not living them. I neglected my family, did not listen to my colleagues, I only cared about my prestige and success as a playwright while pretending to care about the common good. But then a very special friend showed me the way to a different path.

Therefore, in memory of my friend, I pledge that all of the proceeds from my play will go to a scholarship fund for female and minority students studying playwriting. In addition.....

(OLIVIA walks across the front of the stage, seems oblivious to her surroundings. She Exits. ROBERT stops talking abruptly and follows her with his eyes, in shock.)

Oh, it's her. It's her! Stop. Come back. Olivia! Olivia! Wait for me! I need to talk to you.

(Exit ROBERT. The others are stunned and look at each other in amazement)

Scene 21

(The Woods)

ROBERT

What happened to you? Where have you been for the last three years?

OLIVIA

I felt, it was best that I leave.

ROBERT

Why didn't you tell me you were leaving?

OLIVIA

This love between us....

ROBERT

You could have at least said goodbye. I was worried sick about you.

OLIVIA

It was too much for us to handle. Too much for me to even say goodbye.

ROBERT

I had no way of getting a hold of you.

OLIVIA

I wrote you a letter.

ROBERT

I never got it.

OLIVIA

I never mailed it.

ROBERT

Well that helps. Olivia, you don't seem to understand the depths of the suffering you have put me through! I really *care* for you. I have been completely on edge without a clue as to where you were! Or how you felt about me! Nothing at all!

OLIVIA

I needed time to think what was best.

ROBERT

For three years?

OLIVIA

Great Loves wait for centuries if need be.

ROBERT

Great Loves wait? How was I supposed to know we were a Great Love? We were barely getting started and you walked away.

OLIVIA

I wanted to give you time to decide what it was that you really wanted. (*pause*) So, is success as wonderful as they say it is?

ROBERT

Yes it's great. Success is wonderful. But it's even better if you have someone you really love to share it with. Olivia, don't ever leave me.

OLIVIA

Robert, you are in a complicated situation. How can you fit me into your life?

ROBERT

My life can be simplified. Anything to have you in it.

OLIVIA

Anything? Are you sure you mean that?

ROBERT

Yes, anything. I will give up anything to be with you. You and Puck and Shakespearland are where I want to be! I need you!

OLIVIA

Alright. Shakespearland is where will both shall live forever.

(Enter JOHN, KATIA, JULIA, KYLE)

JOHN

There he is. See, I was right, he did come this way.

KATIA

Robert, what happened? Are you alright? You ran out of there like you had seen a ghost!

JULIA

You had us all scared

KYLE

They say too much success is just as stressful as too much failure.

ROBERT

I'm perfectly fine. I'm just talking to Olivia here. Kyle, Julia, do you remember Olivia? She used to be a student here.

JOHN

Robert, are you feeling all right?

ROBERT

I said, I am feeling fine. I needed to talk to Olivia, she is a close friend and I have not seen her in a long time.

JOHN

You are talking to...Olivia? And she is standing...over there?

ROBERT

Yes.

KATIA

It's the stress. It's done him in.

JULIA

Should we call a doctor?

KYLE

Good idea. I think I better get back and see if I can find a medical professional in the premises.

(EXIT KYLE)

ROBERT

Why are you all acting like I'm dying or something? Do you see something I don't see?

JOHN

No. We don't see something that you DO see. Robert, you are alone here. There is not a young woman with you.

ROBERT

What? What are you talking about? She is right there by the big oak tree. *(Pointing to her)* Olivia, wave to them. *(Olivia waves)* See? She just waved.

KATIA

Darling THERE IS NO ONE THERE!

ROBERT

What? No, she is there. I see her. What is wrong with you people? Open your eyes. In fact, she is the one that helped me write the play. She came to me, in my dreams, dressed as a fairy child, as Puck actually. Olivia say something so they will know you are here. *(Olivia says nothing, just shakes her head.)* Come on don't be shy now. It's so funny, in my dream she said she was from Shakespearland and well, that I was held in high esteem there. That really did me in....

JULIA

There is no one there Robert. We don't see this girl. We never had a student named Olivia.

ROBERT

She was in the playwriting workshop.

JOHN

There was not a student named Olivia in the workshop. And I don't see her now. There is no one there.

ROBERT

It can't be!

KATIA, JOHN, JULIA

THERE IS NO ONE THERE!

(Robert falls to his knees)

Scene 22

(The home of Robert Bellamy. Six months later. KATIA is on the phone)

KATIA

Thank you, Marty for keeping an eye on things for us regarding his play. Yes. We leave today on a much needed vacation, a month long cruise through the Mediterranean. Well, he is doing much better. After his little nervous breakdown due to stress and over-work, at least that is what the doctors said, he realized he needed to take a break. Alright, you keep us informed too about any developments. Will do, bye Marty. Talk to you soon.
(hangs up phone)

(ENTER ROBERT with a suitcase and dressed for travel.)

Darling, are you ready?

(Robert nods)

Did you take your medication?

(He nods again)

Good. I'm calling a taxi in a minute, just have to make sure the windows are all closed and locked. I can't believe I'm finally going to see the Greek Isles. Heaven. You wait right here I will be right back. *(doorbell rings)* Oh it must be your friends come to say goodbye.

(Exit KATIA to the foyer. Enter JOHN, JULIA)

JOHN

Well aren't you looking dapper and ready to travel.

JULIA

The Greek Isles, I am very envious Robert.

ROBERT

I can finally read Plato and Aristotle in their proper format.

JULIA

Sounds lovely. I hope you get in some good rest.

JOHN

Some much needed rest.

JULIA

Kyle sends his love, he says he is sorry he could not come but Fee-Fee, one of his poodles, is very sick.

ROBERT

Oh no, not Fee-fee. She is my favorite. So, how are you enjoying being Department Head again Julia?

JULIA

I must admit, it feels amazing. I hope to stay in this position from now on, hint, hint. Oh, the students wanted for me to give you this. (*hands him a card*)

ROBERT

(*reads it*) That is so sweet. Tell them thank you for the thoughtful words and concern.

JULIA

They really do miss you. They can't wait for you to come back next year and teach Shakespeare.

ROBERT

I miss them too. But, for now Greece beckons. Shakespeare will have to wait!

JOHN

What? Did I hear right? Shakespeare has to wait?

ROBERT

That's right.

JOHN

Good for you Robert. About time. Well, we better get rolling and let Robert and Katia get on their way.

JULIA

Yes, we don't want to make you late. Have a great trip Robert. (*hugs him*)

ROBERT

Julia, next year, will you include some Shakespeare plays, some classics?

JULIA

It will. Now that I am department head again, I get the final say. The plays the theatre department presents will include classics, Shakespeare, and feminist and minority theatre.

You have made me a believer. I don't want to exclude anyone! But, Robert, times have changed. You might be fighting a losing battle.

ROBERT

Time will tell.

JULIA

(hugging him) Robert, you live in a different world. A beautiful world. Maybe some day I can visit.

JOHN

Take care old man. *(hugs him)*

ROBERT

I will. Take good care of the department and the Arts Center while I'm gone.

JOHN

Will do. *(walking to foyer)* Katia, we're leaving!

(Enter KATIA)

KATIA

Thank you for coming. I'll walk you to your car.

(Exit JULIA, JOHN and KATIA)

ROBERT

Is there such a thing as pure bliss? I say there can be. But figuring out what it is can be very elusive. It took me half a lifetime.

(Enter OLIVIA with a basket full of flowers and a picnic blanket. She lays the blanket on the living room floor, sits down, and waves to him. He waves back at her.)

I have been revered and ridiculed. I have cried at the top and rejoiced at the bottom. There is a certain ambiguity to life, I've noticed. Things never turn out quite like you expect them to. And often, the obstacles you encounter, are really the tools that will lead you to yourself. So, what induces pure bliss you ask?

(He walks to her. She hands him a flower. He takes it and breathes it in deeply.)

Well, this is what works for me.

THE END

