

UTSC Drama Society's Summer Reading Series
Episode 3: Goodnight Desdemona, Good Morning Juliet by
Ann-Marie MacDonald

Joanna

Welcome to the UTSC Drama Society's Summer Reading Series. On this episode we'll be hearing an excerpt from 'Goodnight Desdemona, Good Morning Juliet' by Ann-Marie MacDonald. For context, Constance is a young english literature professor from Queen's University. She is currently attempting to write her thesis to prove that neither 'Othello' nor 'Romeo & Juliet' were originally supposed to be tragedies but rather comedies. In addition to that, she also believed that Shakespeare plagiarized both pieces from another author. Prior to this she has been writing works on behalf of her boss in the hopes that he will give her a coveted position at Oxford when it becomes available. However, he has his own plans in mind. This is 'Goodnight Desdemona, Good Morning Juliet.'

ACT 1

Scene 1

Constance's Office.

Constance enters her office, absently humming and occasionally singing, "Fairy Tales Can Come True." She wears a coat, boots, and bright red woolen toque with a pom-pom at the end. She is laden with a bookbag, a Complete Works of Shakespeare and a stack of dog-eared loose-leaf foolscap. The telephone rings, but Constance, in the middle of jotting down a particularly salient note on her foolscap, only manages to lay her hand on the phone just as it ceases to ring. She removes her coat, under which she wears a crumpled tweedy skirt and jacket suit. She forgets to remove her toque and wears it throughout the scene. She sits down at her desk, opens a drawer, and takes out a package of Velveeta cheese upon which she

nibbles while warming to her subject. Throughout the rest of the scene Constance works aloud on her doctoral thesis: a copious dog-eared document handwritten in green ink on foolscap.

Constance

Pen...

“Romeo and Juliet and Othello: The Seeds of Corruption and Comedy.” Of all Shakespeare’s tragedies, *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* produce the most ambivalent and least Aristotelean responses. In neither play do the supposedly fate-oriented deaths of the flawed heroes and heroines, seem quite inevitable. Indeed, it is only because the deaths do occur that they can be called inevitable in hindsight, thus allowing the plays to squeak by under the designation, “tragedy.” In both plays, the tragic characters, particularly Romeo and Othello, have abundant opportunity to save themselves. The fact that they do not save themselves, tends to characterize them as the unwitting victims of a disastrous practical joke. Insofar as these plays may be said to be fatalistic at all, any grains of authentic tragedy must be seen to reside in the heroines, Desdemona and Juliet.

A sheaf of papers slides under the office door. Constance goes to the door and stoops to pick them up just as they begin to slide out again. A little tug of war ensues. Suddenly the door opens against Constance’s head. She stands up to see a young female student.

Student

I’m sorry Miss Ledbelly, I thought you were out.

Constance

Oh. Um. I’m in.

Student takes the sheaf from Constance and writes on it

Student

I put the incorrect date on my essay.

Constance

Oh. What's today?

Student

It's the first.

Constance

The first what?

Student

Of the month.

Constance

Oh.

Student hands essay back to Constance

Student

I know it's a week past the due date but you remember the extension you gave me, eh?

Constance

I did?

Student

Yes, because I've been ill lately.

Coughs

Constance

Oh yes, well, whatever, that's fine.

Student

Thanks Miss Ledbelly.

Constance

Wha-uh, what was this assignment?

Student

“The Effect of Filth on Renaissance Drama.”

Constance

Good. That sounds just fine Julie, uh Jill uh...keep up the good work.

Student

Thanks, Miss. By the way, I like your hair like that. It's really pretty.

Constance

Oh. Thanks.

*She vaguely touches her hair below the toque
Exit Student. Constance closes the door then, stuffing the student's essay
into her bookbag.*

Lie thou there. Now where was I?

She takes a bite of Velveeta and settles down to work

Uh, At...At the tragic turning point in *Othello* even the hardened fatalist is at pains to suppress a cry of warning, id est, “O Othello, O Tragic Man, stop your ears against the false yapping of that cur, Iago. The divine Desdemona, despite her fascination with violence and her love of horror stories, and aside from the fact that she deceived her father to elope with you, is the very embodiment of purity and charity.”

Constance opens her Shakespeare, oblivious to Othello and Iago who enter and play out the following scene which she reads silently to herself.

Iago

My Lord Othello, did Cassio, when you wooed Desdemona, know of your love?

Othello

He did from first to last, Iago.
And went between us very oft.

Iago

Indeed?

Othello

Indeed? Ay, indeed! Decendist aught in that? Is he not honest?

Iago

Honest, my lord?

Othello

Honest? Ay, honest.

Iago

My lord, for aught I know.

Othello

What dost thou think?

Iago

Think, my lord?

Othello

Think, my lord?

By heaven thou echo't me,
as if there were some monster in thy thought
too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something.
If thou dost love me, show me thy thought.

Iago

My lord, you know I love you.

Constance takes a previously opened can of Coors Light beer from her desk drawer and sips it.

Constance

We are willing to accept Iago's effortless seduction of Othello unto foaming jealousy - the Moor is, after all, an aging warrior, in love with honour and young Desdemona

Constance turns a page of Shakespeare. Back to Othello and Iago.

Othello

Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore!
Be sure of it; give me thy ocular proof.

Iago

Tell me but this:
Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief
spotted with strawberries in your wife's hand?

Othello

I gave her such a one; 'twas my first gift.

Iago

I know not that; but such a handkerchief -
I am sure it was your wife's - did I today
see Cassio wipe his beard with.

Othello

If it be that 0

Iago

If it be that, or any that was hers,
It speaks against her with the other proofs.

Othello

Had Desdemona forty thousand lives!
One is too poor, too weak for my revenge.
Damn her, lewd minx! O, damn her! Damn her! O!
I will chop her into messes! Cuckold me!

Iago

O, 'tis foul in her.

Othello

With mine officer!

Iago

That's fouler.

Othello

Get me some poison, Iago, this night.

Iago

Do not do it with poison. Strangle her in her bed, even the bed she
hath contaminated.

Othello

Good, good! The justice of it pleases. Very good! Now art thou my
lieutenant.

Iago

I am your own forever.

Othello and Iago embrace, then exit

Constance

- but we cannot help suspect that all might still so easily be set to rights; and there's the rub! For it is this suspicion which corrects our pure experience of fear and pity at a great man's great plight, and - by the end of the handkerchief scene - threatens to leave us, frankly...irritated.

Constance sips her beer just as the door bursts open. Another young female student, Ramona, stands in the doorway, all business and very assertive

Ramona

Hello Professor, my name is Ramona.

Constance

I'm not actually - I'm, I'm just an Assistant Professor.

Constance suddenly remembers her beer, and conceals it

Ramona

Oh. Well, I wonder if you could pass on a message to Claude for me.

Constance

Claude? Oh, you mean Professor Night.

Ramona

Yes. Just tell him I won the Rhodes.

Constance

Congratulations...Ramona.

Ramona

Thanks. But the way, Coors beer is part of the right-wing infrastructure that has brought this hemisphere to its knees.

Constance

Oh. Sorry. It...was a gift.

Exit Ramona. Constance picks up her beer, goes to throw it away, looks around, then drains it furtively and pitches it into the wastebasket

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare sets the stage for comedy with the invocation of those familiar comic themes, love-at-first-sight, and the fickleness of youth. But no sooner has our appetite for comedy been whetted, when Tybalt slays Mercutio, and poor Romeo proceeds to leave a trail of bodies in his wake.

Constance turns another page of her Shakespeare. Enter Tybalt and Mercutio

Tybalt

Mercutio, thou consortest with Romeo -

Mercutio

Consort? What Tybalt, dost thou make us minstrels? And thou make minstrels of us, look to hear nothing but discords. Here's my fiddlestick; here's that shall make you dance.

Enter Romeo

Tybalt

Romeo, the love I bear thee can afford
no better term than this: thou art a villain.

Romeo

Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee
doth much excuse the appertaining rage
to such a greeting. Villain am I none.
Therefore farewell. I see thou knowest me not.

Tybalt

Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries
that thou hast done me; therefore turn and draw.

Romeo

I do protest I never injured thee,
But love thee better than thou canst devise
till thou shalt know the reason of my love
And so, good Capulet, which name I tender
as dearly as mine own, be satisfied.

Mercutio

O calm, dishonorable, vile submission!
Tybalt, you ratcatcher, will you walk?

Constance

Only Romeo would confess to Tybalt that he has just become his
cousin-in-law by marrying Juliet. Such is our corrupt response that
begs that question, "Is this tragedy?!" Or is it comedy gone awry, when
a host of comic devices is pressed into the blood-soaked service of
tragic ends?

Tybalt

I am for you.

Romeo

Gentle Mercutio, put thy rapier up.

Mercutio

Come sir, you passado!

Tybalt and Mercutio fight

Romeo

Hold Tybalt! Good Mercutio!

Tybalt, under Romeo's arm, thrusts Mercutio in and flies

Courage, man. The hurt cannot be much.

Mercutio

Why the devil came you between us? I was hurt under your arm. A plague a'both your houses!

Mercutio exits and dies. Enter Tybalt

Romeo

Alive in triumph, and Mercutio slain?

Tybalt

Thou wretched boy that didst consort him here,
shalt with him hence.

They fight. Tybalt falls

Romeo

O, I am fortune's fool!

Exit Romeo, Tybalt, Mercutio. Constance reaches into her bookbag and withdraws a pack of Player's Extra Light Cigarettes. It's empty. She spots the Chorus's cigarette butt on the floor, picks it up and carefully begins to repair it

Constance

What if a Fool were to enter the worlds of both *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*? Would he be akin to the Wise Fool in *King Lear*?: a Fool who can comfort and comment, but who cannot alter the fate of the tragic hero. Or would our Fool defuse the tragedies by assuming centre stage as comic hero? Indeed, in *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* the Fool is conspicuous by his very absence, for these two tragedies turn on flimsy mistakes - a lost hanky, a delayed wedding announcement - mistakes too easily concocted and corrected by a Wise Fool. I will go further: are these mistakes, in fact, the footprints of a missing Fool?; a Wise Fool whom Shakespeare eliminated from two earlier comedies by an unknown author?! Non obstante; although a Fool might stem the blundering of *Othello* and *Romeo*, the question remains, would he prove a match...

She pops the cigarette butt between her lips and hunts for a match

for Desdemona and Juliet? Or are these excellent heroines fated to remain tragedies looking for a place to happen?

Having failed to find a match, she tosses the cigarette butt into the wastebasket, then opens the ancient Manuscript. It is the same length

and width as foolscap. She becomes momentarily absorbed in it, trying to decipher it, turning it every which way

Nevertheless. I postulate that the Gustav Manuscript, when finally decoded, will prove the prior existence of two comedies by an unknown author; comedies that Shakespeare plundered and made over into ersatz tragedies! It is an irresistible - if wholly repugnant - thought.

The office door opens slightly. Oblivious, Constance resumes her soft tuneless singing. She takes up her fountain pen once more but discovers it is out of ink. She bends down to her bookbag on the floor to look for a refill and does not see Professor Claude Night enter on tip-toe. He is about the same age as Constance, is perfectly groomed and brogued, speaks with an Oxford accent, and oozes confidence. He silently perches on her desk. She rises from the depths of her bookbag, sees him, and hits the roof.

Ah-h-h!

Professor

Heh-heh-heh, got you again Connie.

Constance

Heh. Oh Professor night, you scared the daylights out of me.

Professor

You must learn to relax, my little titmouse. You're working too hard. Speaking of which...have you got something for me?

Constance stares at him for a moment too long before answering

Constance

Yes. It's somewhere here.

She begins rummaging. Professor picks up her green-ink thesis. He shakes his head, Constance surfaces from her desk with a thick essay, also handwritten in green ink on foolscap. She sees that he is reading her thesis. She shoots out her hand involuntarily and snatches it from him.

Don't read that!...sir...the ink's not dry.

She stuffs her thesis into a drawer of her desk. He wipes green ink-stained fingers on his handkerchief

Professor

Still harping on the Gustav Manuscript are you? I hate to see you turning into a laughing stock Connie. You know you'll never get your doctorate at this rate.

Constance

I know...I guess I just have a thing for lost causes.

Professor

You're an incurable romantic Connie.

Constance

Just a failed existentialist

Professor

Traipsing after the Holy Grail, or the Golden Fleece or some such figment.

Constance

Whoever cracks the Gustav code will be the right up there with Darwin, Bingham -

Professor

And Don Quixote. The best tenured minds in the world have sought to translate it for the past three hundred years. What gives you the notion you're special?

Constance

I'm not the least bit special, I'm, I'm just one flawed and isolated fragment of a perfect infinite mind like anybody else, I-I think that I exist in that you and I are here chatting with the sense of evidence of each other, insofar as we're not over there not chatting, no I'm not special - unique maybe, in the, in the sense that a snowflake is unique, but no more valuable than any other flake...It's just that I, I did win the Dead Languages Prize as an undergraduate, and it would be a shame to hide my light under a bushel.

Professor

Say you did crack these obscure alchemical hieroglyphs; what if they turned out to be a grocery list or some such rubbish?

Constance

I think it's source material that Shakespeare wanted to suppress yet preserve.

Professor

And I suppose you've feverishly identified a whole raft of anagrams to support this here say?

Constance

As a matter of fact, yes. If you take the second letter of the eighteenth word of every second scene in *Othello*, and cross reference them with the corresponding letters in *Romeo and Juliet*, it says: "I dare not name the source of this txt."

Professor

"txt"?

Constance

Well, "text." I'm missing the letter, "e," it was probably deleted in later printing.

Professor

Your fascination with mystery broadens on the vulgar, I'm afraid.

Constance

I can't help it. I'm a fallen Catholic. It's left me with a streak of "whodunit."

Professor

Well who dun it? What became of this mysterious source material?

Constance

I think Shakespeare gave it to his elderly friend, Gustav the alchemist, to shroud in an arcane code, and that's what's in here.

Professor

Oh Connie. You have such an interesting little mind.

Constance

Thank you sir.

Professor

Hand it over.

Constance thinks he is referring to the Manuscript

No, ye gods forfend, not that decrepit tome. The - ahem - your latest commission.

Constance

Oh, the essay. Here you go. I hope I've destroyed Professor Hollowfern's book to your satisfaction.

Professor

I'm sure it's up to your customarily dizzying standard. Did you remember to give yourself the usual thanks for "irksome proofing of the text"?

Constance

In point of fact sir, I took the liberty of dedicating it to myself.

Professor

That's awfully sweet of you Connie. Tsk tsk tsk your hand gets more cryptic all the time. Like the tracks of some tiny green creature. I do wish you'd learn to type, my dear. I'm weary of doing my own typing, and I daren't trust anyone else with our little secret.

Constance

I'm working on it sir, but my fine motor skills are really poor.

Professor

Indeed.

Constance

I'm ready for my next assignment Professor. I've sharpened my nib to a killing point.

Professor

And dipped it in venom to paralyze the academic foe with one poisonous phrase?

Constance

Just name your victim.

Professor

Connie. There remains but one thing you can do for me.

Constance

Oh?...What's that?

Professor

Tell me...do you like it?

Constance

Oh Professor Night -

Professor

Claude

Constance

Oh Claude...it's the most beautiful diamond I've ever seen.

Professor

Dear Connie. Thank you. I'm the happiest man in the world.

Constance

So am I. I can't quite believe it!

Professor

Neither will Ramona.

Constance

Ramona?...Oh.

Professor

I'm going to miss you Connie.

Constance

Am I going somewhere?

Professor

I am, pet. I've decided to take that lecturing post at Oxford myself. Even if it does fall somewhat short of a challenge.

Constance

Oh, I thought you might recommend someone less distinguished, say an assistant professor, for that job.

Professor

That's what I thought too until Ramona 1 the roads now it's Oxford for the both of us a what

Constance

What about - will I still work for you?

Professor

I'm afraid not love, I'm a professor today, so the pressure is off.

Constance

Congratulations.

Professor

Not to worry I've lined up a lovely post for you and Regina.

Constance

Thanks.

Professor

What's your schedule like after tomorrow? I hope you'd help pack my books.

Constance

I love to but that's my birthday and I planned on going to the zoo

Professor

Birthday eh? Chalk up another one for the Grim Reaper. Still 29 and holding are we? Well, Many happy reruns. I've got to dash. I'm addressing the literary Society this evening which reminds me!

*Constance has anticipated him, and his hand hands him another
Sheaf of inkley green.*

Constance

Here's your speech.

Professor

Thanks old girl.

He tugs the pong pong on her toque then exits with:

Oxford ho!

*Constance slowly pulls off her toque and drops it into the wastebasket.
She's in shock. This is the nadir of her passage on this Earth.*

Constance

Regina. I hate the Prairies. They're flat. It's in the absolute nightmare landscape of absolutes and I'm a relativist, I'll go mad. Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend. Diamonds are harder than a bed of nails. I can't feel anything. I'm perfectly fine. I'll call the Dean and resign. I'll go back to my apartment and watch the plants die and let the cats copulate freely. I'll order in groceries. Eventually I'll be evicted. I'll smell really bad and swear at people on the subway. Five years later I run into Professor Night and Ramona: they don't recognize me. I'm selling pencils. They buy one. Suddenly, I drop dead. They discovered my true identity. I'm awarded my doctorate posthumously. Professor Night dedicates his complete works to me and lays roses on my grave every day. My stone bears a simple epithet: "Oh what a noble mind is here o'erthrown." ... There's no time to lose! I have to start right now if I'm going to sink that low in five years.

Grabs phone, dials

Hello, give me the office of the dean! Oh yes, I'll hold.

While holding, she surveys the objects on her desk, picks them up one by one, addresses them, then tosses them into the wastebasket

The bronze wings that my Brownie pack gave me.

Reads the inscription

“To the best brown owl in the forest.” I flew up more girls than any brown owl other than Lady Baden-Powell.

Toss. Picks up a jar that contains something like an anchovy

My appendix. It was removed in the summer of love when the rest of my family went to Expo 67. The doctor gave it to me in this baby food jar. He thought it would cheer me up. It did.

Toss. Takes the plumed fountain pen from behind your ear

The fountain pen I made from my parakeet, Laurel. She used to sing “Voltaire.” She fell five stories and instantly died.

Goes to toss it away, but cannot bear to do so. She replaces it behind your ear, where it stays for the rest of the play. Picks up the manuscript

And this - my Fool's Gold. Silent mocking Oracle. I'll do the world a favour.

Constance goes to toss it in the wastebasket but her gesture is suddenly arrested in midair and she stares, Spellbound, at the inscription on the cover. Harp music and light effects. She blinks and tries to focus, as though the inscription were swimming before her eyes with a disorienting effect. Constance reads the inscription aloud:

“You who possess the eyes to see
The strange and wondrous Alchemy,
Where words transform to vision’ry,

Where one plus two makes one, not three;
Open this book if you agree
To be illusion's Refugee,
End of return no guarantee,
Unless you find your true identity.
And discover who the Author be."

Constance hesitates for a moment, then opens the manuscript. Its three pages fall out and down into the wastebasket. Constance sets the cover on her desk then Stoops and reaches into the wastebasket to achieve the pages. Suddenly her arm jerks downward; she's being pulled down into the wastebasket. Warp effects, sound of screeching wind and music. When the sound and lights return to normal in Constance's office, she's nowhere to be seen. The phone retriever dangles off the hook. Smoke issues from the wastebasket. The Chorus's head, a cigarette between his lips, emerges from the wastebasket

Chorus

You've witnessed an impossible event,
A teacher, spinster - "Old Maid," some would say -
whose definition of fun and excitement
is a run of 'ibids' in an essay,
disappears before your very eyes.
Suspend your disbelief. Be foolish wise.
For anything is possible, you'll find,
with a zone of the unconscious mind.

His head disappears back into the wastebasket. During the scene change, we over here Othello and Iago via their enhanced voice over:

Iago

Think, my Lord?

Othello

Think, my Lord? By heaven thou echo'st.

Iago

Indeed?

Othello

Indeed? Ay indeed!

Iago

Think, my Lord?

Othello

Think, my Lord? Ay!

Iago

Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief?

Othello

If it be that -

Iago

If it be that -

Othello

Goats and monkeys!

Iago

Indeed.

ACT 2

Scene 1

Othello's Citadel at Cyprus.

*Othello and Iago reprise the end of the "Handkerchief Scene."
Desdemona's "strawberry-spotted" handkerchief hangs out the back of
Iago's house.*

Iago

Tell me but this:

Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief
Spotted with strawberries in your wife's hand?

Othello

I gave her such a one; 'twas my first gift

Iago

I know not that; but such a handkerchief -
I am sure it was your wife's - did I today
See Cassio wipe his beard with.

Othello

If it be that -

Iago

It it be that, or any that was hers
It speaks against her with the other proofs.

Constance's head peeks out from behind the arras

Othello

Had Desdemona forty thousand lives!

One is too poor, too weak for my revenge.
Damn her, lewd minx! O, damn her! Damn her, O!
I will chop her into messes! Cuckold me!

Iago

O, this foul in her.

Othello

With mine officer!

Iago

That's fouler.

Othello

Get me some poison Iago, this night.

Iago

Do it not with poison.

Iago hands a pillow to Othello

Strangle her in bed.

Constance

No!

Both Othello and Iago turn and stare at her, amazed

Um...you're about to make a terrible mistake...m'Lord.

Shocked, and at a loss for words to explain her statement, Constance gathers her courage and timidly approaches Iago

Excuse me please.

She plucks the handkerchief from Iago's hose and gives it to Othello

Othello

Desdemona's handkerchief

To Iago

Which thou didst say she gave to Cassio?

Iago

Did I say that? What I meant to say -

Othello

O-o-o! I see that nose of thine, but not that dog I shall throw it to!

Iago

My lord, I can explain -

Constance

Omigod, what have I done?

*She grabs the handkerchief from Othello and tries unsuccessfully to stuff it
back into Iago's pocket*

Look, just forget you ever saw me here, okay?!

She grabs the pillow and offers it to Othello

Here.

Othello ignores the pillow and proceeds to bind and threaten Iago

I've wrecked a masterpiece. I've ruined the play,

I've turned Shakespeare's *Othello* to a farce.

O Jesus, they've got swords! And this is Cyprus;
there's a war on here! O please wake up.

Please be a dream. I've got to go back home!

Back to my cats. They'll starve. They'll eat the plants.
They'll be so lonely.

To Othello

Please! I've got to go!
Where's the exit!

Othello

Stay!!

Constance

Sure.

Othello

Forty-thousand lives were not enough
to satisfy my debt to you, strange friend.
I'd keep you on this island till I knew
which angel beached you on our war-like shores,
and how you gained fair knowledge of foul deeds.

Constance

Well. Actually. I've studied you for years.

Othello

You must be learned oracle.
I'd have you nightly search the firmament,
and daily read the guts of sheep for signs
to prophesize our battles with the turk.

Constance

I only know of our domestic life.

Othello

And of the murd'rous viper in my breast.

My shame is deeper than the Pontic sea,
which yet would drown in my remorseful tears,
whose crashing waves are mute before the trumpet cry
of this atoning heart would tremble Jericho!

Constance

Oh well, I wouldn't dwell on it too much.
You'd never have been jealous on your own.

Othello

O yes, I had forgot. 'Twas all thy fault.
If that you be the mirror of my soul.
then you must learn the story of my life:
of moving accidents by flood and field,
by hairbreadth scapes i'th'imminent deadly breach,
of being taken by the insolent foe-

Constance

Oh yes, I know.

Iago

So know we all the wag and swagger of this tale.

Othello

In Egypt, kicked I sand into the eyes
of infidels who thought I made a truce
when I did give to them a pyramid
on wheels they pulled into the garrison.
But I had packed it full with Christian men,
who slit the savage throat of ever Turk.

Constance

That sounds like Troy.

Iago

Not Troy, but false.

Constance

And Desdemona fell in love with you,
because she loved to hear you talk of war.

Othello

These things to hear she seriously inclined.

Constance

I've always thought she had a violent streak,
and that she lived vicariously through you,
but no one else sees eye to eye with me.
Yet I maintain, she did elope with you,
and sailed across a war zone just to live
in this armed camp, therefore - Her's not a Moor.

Iago

Amour? Ah-ha! C'est ca! Et pourquoi pas?!

Othello

Here comes the lady. Let her witness it.

Enter Desdemona attended by a soldier who carries her needlework

Desdemona

O valiant general and most bloody lord!

Othello

O my fair warrior!

Desdemona

My dear Othello!

Constance

Divine Desdemona!

Othello

My better self?!

Othello and Desdemona embrace

Iago

And my escaped prey. I'll trap thee yet.

Desdemona

That I love my lord to live with him,
my downright violence and storm of fortunes
may trumpet to the world. My sole regret -
that heaven had not made me such a man;
but next in honour is to be his wife.
And I love honour more than life! Who's this?

Everyone turns and stares at Constance

Constance

Hi...Desdemona?...This is like a dream...
You're just as I imagined you to be.

*Constance, in awe, reaches out to touch the hem of Desdemona's sleeve
and fingers it throughout her next speech*

I'm Constance Ledbelly. I'm an academic.
I come from Queen's. You're real. You're really real.

Desdemona

As real as thou art, Constance, Queen of Academe.

Constance

Is that my true identity? Gosh.
I was just a teacher 'til today.

Desdemona

A learned lady? O most rare in kind.
And does your husband not misprize this knowledge?

Constance

Oh I'm not married.

Iago

Most unnatural!

Othello

A virgin oracle! Thanks be to Dian!

Desdemona

Brave aged maid, to wander all alone!

Constance

I'm really more of an armchair traveller.
In fact this is the biggest trip I've made.
I've only ever gone on package tours.

Desdemona

I long to hear the story of your life.

Constance

There isn't much to tell. It's very dull.
I'm certain your life's much much more exciting.

Desdemona

This modesty becomes your royal self.
Othello, may she lodge with us awhile?

Othello

I would she'd never leave these bisting banks.
She hath uncanny knowledge of our lives,
and sees us better than we see ourselves.
So now art thou my oracle and chastity.

Othello grips Constance in a bear hug.

Hither sent by fortune, she hath saved me
from perdition such as nothing else could match.
Make her a darling like your precious eye.
You are her greatest friend.
But don't tell why.
Deliver up the handkerchief, thou cur.

Othello takes the handkerchief and presents it to Desdemona

Iago

I was just testing you my lord.

Desdemona

If I do vow a friendship, I'll perform it
to the last article. Othello's honour is my own.
If you do find me foul in this,
then let thy sentence fall upon my life;
as I am brave Othello's faithful wife.

Desdemona seizes Constance and squeezes her in a soldierly embrace

Constance

Thanks

A blast of trumpets

Ah-h!

Desdemona

Ah, supper. They have killed a suckling pig
in honour of thee.

Constance

I'm a vegetarian
That is - I don't eat...flesh. Of any kind.

Desdemona

Such abstinence is meet in vestal vows,
therefore in all points do I find thee true.
I'd serve thee, Pedant! Beg of me a boon!
Though it be full of poise and difficult weight, and
fearful to be granted, I'll perform it!

Constance

There is a problem you could help me with.
I'm not sure how to say this.

Desdemona

Speak it plain.

Constance

All right, I will. I'm from another world -

Desdemona

Ay, Academe. And ruled by mighty Queens,
a race of Amazons who brook no men.

Constance

It's really more like -

Desdemona

Nothing if not war-like!
I'd join these ranks of spiked and fighting shes:
to camp upon the deserts vast and sing
our songs of conquest, and a drive or two
for sisters slain on honour's gory field.

Constance

If only I could bring you home with me.

Desdemona

I'll anywhere with thee, my friend.

Constance

That's it,
you see, I can't return until - That is...
my Queens have charged me with a fearful task:
I must find out my true identity,
and then discover who the author be.

Desdemona

Thou dost not know thyself?

Constance

Apparently not.

Desdemona

Do none in Academe know who thou art?

Constance

Maybe. They call me Connie to my face,
and something else behind my back.

Desdemona

What's that?

Constance

“The Mouse.”

Desdemona

“The Mouse”?

Constance

I saw it carved into a lecture stand.

Desdemona

The sculptor dies.

Constance

Ironic really, since in my world,
women are supposed to be afraid of mice.

Desdemona

O fie, that’s base! Where be the Amazons?

Constance

In fact they’re few and far between
and often shoved to th’ fringe.

Desdemona

Let’s fly to their beleaguered side.

Constance

My tasks.

Desdemona

The first task is performed already Con,
thou art an Amazon.

Constance

I’m not so sure.

Desdemona

As to the second task, the Author find.
There be no authors here, but warriors.

Constance

I'm looking for the Author of it all.
How can I put this? Who made you?

Desdemona

God made me.

Constance

But do you know another name for God?

Desdemona

God's secret name?

Constance

That's it! God's secret name.

Desdemona

Seek not to know what God would keep a mystery.

Constance

Have you known God to be called Shakespeare?

Desdemona

Shake Spear? He might be a pagan god of war.

Constance

This isn't Shakespeare. It must be source.
Then I was right about the Manuscript!

Desdemona

Manuscript?

Constance

The book that conjured...this.

It's written by that secret name of God.

If I could find those foolscap pages -

Desdemona

Fool's cap?

Constance

About yea long, and written in a code;

they fell into the garbage. So did I.

Desdemona

This Garbage, be it ocean, lake, or sea?

Constance

...A sean then - if you like - Sargasso Sea.

Desdemona

I'll call this quest mine own, my constant friend.

Thought I should drown in deep Sargasso Sea,

I'll find thine unknown Author and Fool's Cap,

For I do love thee! And when I love thee not,

chaos is come again.

A cannon blaas. Constance is badly startled. Battle cries within.

The infidel!

This volley heralds battle with the Turk.

Let's to the sea wall and enjoy the fray!

Constance

Oh no, I can't. I can't stand violence.

Desdemona

If thou wouldst know thyself an Amazon,
acquire a taste for blood. I'll help thee. Come on.

She takes Constance's hand and starts to her off. Constance pulls back.

Constance

No, please!!! I won't look. I'll be sick. I can't even kill a mosquito!

Desdemona

Thou shalt be et alive in Cyprus, Con.
Learn to kill.

Constance

No!

Desdemona

That's a fault! Thy sole deficiency.
An errat woman that would live alone,
no husband there, her honour to defend,
must study to be bloody and betimes.

Constance

Please promise me you'll follow your advice.

Desdemona

So will we both. And we be women: not mice.
Come go with me.

Constance

Okay. I'll be right there.

Desdemona exits.

They can't use real blood, can they?

Another cannon blast

Omigod!

Oh Constance, don't be scared, it's just a play,
and Desdemona will look after you.

Desdemona! I am verging on
the greatest academic breakthrough of
the twentieth century!

I merely must determine authorship.

But have I permanently changed the text? -

You're floundering in the waters of a flood;
the Mona Lisa and a babe float by.

Which one of these two treasures do you save?

I've saved the baby, and let the Mona drown -

Or did the Author know that I'd be coming here,
and leave a part for me to play? How am I cast?

As cast-away to start, but what's my role?

I entered, deus ex machina,
and Desdemona will not die,
because I dropped in from the sky...

Does that make this a comedy?

And does it prove my thesis true?

In that case, I've preempted the Wise Fool!

He must be here somewhere - I'll track him down
and reinstate him in the text,

and then I'll know who wrote this travesty,
since every scholar worth her salt agrees,
the Fool is the mouthpiece of the Author!

It's all so strange...What's even stranger though -

*She counts the beats of her speech by tapping each of the five fingers of
one hand onto the palm of the other, in time with her words.*

I speak in blank verse like the characters:
Unrhymed iambical pentameter.
It seems to come quite nat'rally to me.
I feel so eloquent and...

Making up the missing beats.

eloquent.
My god. Perhaps I'm on an acid trip.
What if some heartless student spiked my beer?!

Stops counting.

Nonsense. This is my head, this is my
pen, this is *Othello*, Act III, Scene iii.

Sounds of the fray within

Desdemona

Constance, the fray!

Constance

Desdemon, I obey!

Constance dashes off toward Desdemona's voice.

Scene 2

Same.

Enter Iago bearing two buckets of filth on a yoke.

Iago

Othello seeks to hide the grisly news
that he did almost kill his guiltless wife,
so dares not hut me openly in law,

but decorates my service with a mean and stinking
yoke. For this, I thank the pedant:
Othello's vestal mascot, Desdemona's cherished pet.

Takes a Manuscript page from his shirt

My wife found this by change.
It's in no Christian hand, but pigeon pecks -
the script of infidels! Or mayhap not.
Whate'er it be, I will endow it ill,
for it must dovetail with my plot. Let's see:
To 'venge myself upon the bookish mouse,
regain my former credit with my lord,
and undo Desdemona once again...
How? How? Ah-ha! Confide myself
betrayed by pedant's lies, to Desdemona!;
for she is of a free and noble nature
that thinks men honest that but seem to be.
I'll tell Constance is a spy and whore
would skewer state and marriage on the same cabob!
Thus I blind and train my falcon for the job.

*Sounds of the battle off, as Constance enters. She does not look well. Iago
withdraws to shadows, unseen. Constance collapses on a rampart and
hangs her head between her knees. Desdemona enters with a severed
head. Between the lips of the head is scroll*

Desdemona

Constance! Sister! Here's thy boon!
Behold what I have plucked off the beach!

Constance beholds the head and nearly vomits

'Tis like to be thy fool's cap. Take it. Read.

Constance, trying not to make eye contact with the head, plucks the scroll from between its teeth. She opens it. A bowel falls out. She forces herself to read the scroll.

Constance

Hm...it's in Sumerian...

Desdemona

Script of infidels!

Constance

"The tapestries and portraits of the main hall.
Five spring lambda, all the horses and women-flesh.."
This isn't it. This is a lootling list.

Desdemona

Addressing head

Villain!

*Tosses head off
Constance is about to faint*

Faint not my noble heart of Academe.
Envision thy worst foe with open gorge.

Constance

But I don't have a foe.

Desdemona

Fie, thou must have!

Constance

There's only one on earth whom I resent.
But never did he mean to hurt me.

Desdemona

Nay?

Who be this false foe?

Constance

He's Professor Claude Night.

Desdemona

What harm to thee?

Constance

I used to work for him.

For ten years I...assisted him, by writing.

Some articles he would have writ himself,
had he the time, but he's a busy man.

Now he's got the tenure and an Oxford post
I hoped was meant for me.

Desdemona

Ten years of ghostly writing for a thief?

Thy mind hath proved a cornucopia
to slake the glutton, sloth, and he hath cooked
his stolen feast on thy Promethean heat.

Constance

You really think so?

Desdemona

Ay! Thou wast in thrall;
ten years an inky slave in paper chains!

Constance

Yeah.

Desdemona

He wears the laurel wreath that should be thine.

Constance

I guess he does.

Desdemona

And commands the legion Academe
from Lecture Stands that he usurped from thee.

Constance

What can you do?

Desdemona

Gird thou thy trembling loins,
and slay Professor Night!

Constance

I'm guilty too:
I helped him in deceiving Queen's for years.

Iago

This will serve my turn upon the pedant.

Exit Iago

Desdemona

Shrouded by the demon Night,
and so art thou more sinned than sinning.

Constance

Thanks.

Desdemona

But tell me more of life in Academe.

If there be cannibals that each other eat,
and men whose heads do grow beneath their
shoulders?

These things to harem I seriously incline.

Constance

It is quite dog eat dog. And scary too.
I've slaved for years to get my doctorate,
but in a field like mine that's so well trod,
you run the risk of contradicting men
who've risen the rank sacred cow,
and dying on the horns of those who rule
the pasture with iron cud.
Not that I'm some kind of feminist.
I shave my legs and I get nervous in a crowd -
it's just that...I was labelled as a crackpot,
by the sacred herd of Academe;
and after years spent as a laughingstock,
I finally came to think that it was true.
But, Desdemona, now that I've met you,
I want to stand out in that field and cry, "Bullshit!"

Desdemona

Wherefore? And what, pray tell, may a bullshit be?

Constance

A kind of lie. For instance, Academe
believes that you're doomed and helpless victim.

Desdemona

I?

Constance

Ay.

Desdemona

Did I not beat a path into the fray,
my vow to honour in thy fool's cap quest?
Did I not flee my father, here to dwell
beneath the sword Hephaestus forged for Mars?
Will I not dive into Sargasso Sea,
to serve abreast the Amazons abroad?
Will I not butcher any cow that dares
low lies to call me tame, ay that I will!
So raise I now the battle cry, Bullshit!!

Constance & Desdemona

Bullshit!! Bullshit!! Bullshit!!

Constance

You are magnificent!
Othello should make you his lieutenant.
You're capable of greatness, Desdemona.

Enter the Soldier.

Soldier

What ho! What ho! What ho! What ho! What ho!
Othello, warrior and raconteur,
would see my lady pedant post-post-haste,
in discourse touching secrets of the state.

Constance

Oh, okay. Bye.

Desdemona

Commend me to my lord.

*Iago enters as Constance and the Soldier exit. He sneaks up behind
Desdemona with his bucket. She sniffs the air.*

What putrefaction haunts the island air?
Belike the slaughtered entrails of our meal?

Iago

My lady.

Desdemona

O Iago! And so low?

Iago

But that the love I bear my lord forbids,
I'd howl of treachery that tumbled me
from officer, to sweeper of his sewers/

Desdemona

Nay, speak.

Iago

Since you command it, ma'am, I will:
Once prowled I o'er the battlements, a proud
protective beast to prey upon my lord's
fell foes. Now creep I fetid conduits,
to pay the slime, a declawed panther, trapped.
And by a cunning mouse.

Desdemona

What rodent, this?

Iago

Was that the Academic with you now?

Desdemona

It was.

Iago

And called in private haste upon my Lord?

Desdemona

He makes of her his Delphic prophetess.

Othello said she knows our secret selves.

Iago

Indeed?

Desdemona

Indeed? Ay, indeed. Discernst thou aught in that?

Is she not honest?

Iago

Honest, madam?

Desdemona

Honest, Ay. honest.

Iago

For aught I know.

Desdemona

What dost thou think?

Iago

Think, my lady?

Desdemona

Think, my lady?

By heaven thou echo'st me. Thou dost mean something.

If thou dost love me, show me thy thought.

Iago

It were not for your quiet nor your good,
to let you know my thoughts.

Desdemona

By heaven, I'll know thy thoughts!

Iago

Beware my lady, of the mouse who eats
the lion's cheese while sitting in his lap.

Desdemona

...cheese?...mouse? - lion? - in his lap? ...to eat
there? - What?!

Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy?

Iago

I would I did suspect mere harlotry.

Desdemona

Go to, thou knave!

Desdemona goes to strike Iago

Iago

O monstrous world! Take note, take note, O world,
to be direct and honest is not safe.

He goes to exit.

Desdemona

Nay stay. Thou shouldst be honest.

Iago

I obey.

Desdemona

And give the worst of thoughts the worst of words.

Iago

She lacks a husband.

Desdemona

So?

'Tis vestal study that anoints her chaste.

Iago

Pray God she be not secretly married.

Desdemona

What dost thou mean?

Iago

A hag may seem a maid,
When she in truth is Satan's bride.

Desdemona

A witch?

Iago

She hath uncanny knowledge of our lives.

Desdemona

She spake of conjuring. And names for God,
unknown to Christian ears. Of Amazons,
who brook no men and live alone. Of mice -

Iago

- her own familiar spirits.

Desdemona

Of men, that she changed into sacred cows.

Iago

And so did Circe turn Ulysses' friends
to pigs by witchcraft after she had lain with them.

Desdemona

She's with Othello now; ye stars forbend,
he be not changed by supertime! I'll hence!

Iago

Stay ma'am! That is but half her purpose here.
Doth not the pedant prate of fool's cap?

Desdemona

It is a boom, that I am honour-bound to find.
I swore upon my life, this to perform.

Iago

The devil thus recruits an honest heart.
What's writ upon the fool's cap, in what tongue?

Desdemona

A foreign tongue that's known to her alone.

Iago

What if it be an incantation, wrong
by infidels?

Desdemona

I saw her read their script.
If it be that -

Iago

If it be that, or any heathen tongue,
it speaks against her with the other proofs.

Desdemona

Is she an evil witch they have employed
to conjure up our secrets to their ears?

Iago

The Turk did strike the hour she arrived.

Desdemona

O that the slave had forty thousand lives.
One is too poor, too weak for my revenge!
O why did I embrace her as my friend?!
'Tis monstrous, O!!

Iago

I see this hath a little dashed your spirits.

Desdemona

Not a jot. I'll to my lord and dilate all.

Iago

Hold! My lord's bewitched and hates me now;
he'll not believe.

Desdemona

Then how should we proceed?

Iago

Be not forsworn. Fulfill thy boon to her:
Recover her unholy foolish cap,
her guilt to prove before you strike.

Desdemona

And proving
guilt.

I'll spit her head upon a pike for daws to peck at.
Thou wilt instruct me in the manly work
of sword-play; doubtless she is expert there,
for all her lack-a-liver timid show!

Iago

Patience, I say. Your mind may change.

Desdemona

As well it may. La donna e mobile.

Iago

Yet watch her ma'am, if thou hast eyes to see.
She did deceive her Queens; and she may thee.

Constance and Othello enter in conversation, unaware of Desdemona and Iago who draw back to listen, observe and comment aside

Othello

As thou dost love me, not a word of thi
to Desdemona. She must not suspect.

Constance

Don't worry, it will be our little secret.

They chuckle. Desdemona lunges forward toward but Iago pulls her back

Desdemona

Look how she laughs already!

*Othello takes out a large version of the velvet box that Professor Night had
in Act I, Scene i*

Othello

Which jewels most delight your female eye?

Constance

Diamonds, of course; a girl's best friend.

Othello opens the box, takes a diamond necklace with a prominent gold clasp and places it around Constance's neck

Desdemona

Festoon the whore with baubles!

Othello

The bees of Solomon ne'er counselled half so wise.
Unto thy sweet and heaving breast,
do I confide the honey of my heart.

Desdemona

Drone on my husband, drone.

Constance

Don't mention it.

Othello

Have I e'er told thee of the time I slew
a singing beast in Turkish Antioch
'Twas on a grassy river bank where grazed
a golden ox. The beast did tend this ox.
Three heads grew from the shoulders of the beast.
On one the hair was black as ebony,
the other crown was curled angel fair,
and third head wore a scarlet cap of wool,
that ended in a foolish bauble bright.
As I asked the beast to show the shallow spot

where it was wont to ford the ox of gold.

Constance

In some strange way this beast seems so familiar.

Iago

“Familiar”! Yet again “familiar”!

Most potent witch to suckle such a breast!

Constance

You say you killed it dead?

Othello

The demon fell
and bled a sea of inky green.

Constance

Alas.

Desdemona

She mourns a beast of Turkish Antioch!

Othello

I left the thing for dead, as I made haste
to find a shallow spot and ford my ox.

Constance

Your ox? Ford, your ox? I’m having deja-vu.
I think we’d better leave each other now.
Your wife may come and think that something’s up.

Iago

We know what’s up, and who will soon go down.

Desdemona

Adulteress! Let me stone her in the square!

Othello

Adieu friend, I'll have more of thee anon.

Othello embraces Constance vigorously

Iago

As prime as goats, as hot as monkeys.

Othello release Constance and goes to exit. He stops, sniffs the air

Othello

Iago?

Iago

Emerging from the shadows

My lord.

Othello

Look to the morning's night-soil. And keep in the light.

Iago

Yes my lord.

Othello pats Constance on the head

Constance

'Night 'night.

As Othello exits, Constance sees Iago whisper to Desdemona before he too exits. Constance conceals the necklace

Desdemona

Academic!

Constance

Oh, Desdemona - hi. I've been meaning to ask you, does Lord Othello keep a Wise Fool here?

Desdemona

The only wise fool is one that's dead.
I hate tripping, singing, licensed fool,
that makes a motley of the mighty,
and profanes the sacred with base parody.

Constance

Oh.

Desdemona glowers at Constance

Are you okay?

Desdemona

I have a pain upon my forehead, here.

Constance

Tsk, tsk, tsk, well I'm not surprised. I saw you talking to that creep, Iago -

Desdemona

"Creep"?

Constance

Colloquial for, "base and noisome knave."
I'd stay away from him if I were you.

Desdemona

Wherefore? Hast thou some secret knowledge of him?

Constance

Oh yes. You'd be surprised how much I know.

Desdemona

I think not. I think thou know'st my husband.

Constance

I know some things I hope you'll never know.

Desdemona

What passed between my lord and thee just now?

Constance

Uh-oh. What did you hear?

Desdemona

Enough to rear
suspicion's head.

Constance

Oh no.

Desdemona

O yes!

Constance

Oh well.
Whate'er you do, don't let him know that you suspect.

Desdemona

Nay, he'll know not that I wot aught.
Goats and monkeys!

Desdemona goes to exit

Constance

Boy, Shakespeare really watered her down, eh?...

I wish I were more like Desdemona.

Next to her I'm just a little wimp.

A rodent. Road-kill. Furry tragedy
all squashed and steaming on the 401
with "Michelin" stamped all over me. It's true:
people've always made a fool of me
without my even knowing. Gullible.

That's me. Old Connie. Good sport. Big joke. Ha.

Just like that time at recess in grade five:

a gang of bully girls comes up to me.

Their arms are linked, they're chanting as they
march.

"Hey. Hey. Get outta my way!

I just got back from the I.G.A.!"

I'm terrified. They pin me down,
and force me to eat a dog-tongue sandwich.

I now know it was only ham...

O, what would Desdemona do to Claude,
had she the motive and the cue for passion
that I have? She would drown all Queen's with
blood,

and cleave Claude Night's two typing fingers
from his guilty hands. She'd wrap them in a box
of choc'lates and present them to Ramona.

She'd kill him in cold blood and in black verse,
then smear the ivied walls in scarlet letters spelling
"thief"!

To think, I helped him use me: a gull, a stooge,
a swine adorned with mine own pearls,
a sous-chef, nay! a scull'ry maid that slaved
to heat hell's kitchen with the baking stench
of forty-thousand scalding humble-pies,
Vengeance!!!

Desdemona and Iago enter, sword-fighting. Iago disarms Desdemona, his sword poised to strike. Constance snatches up Desdemona's sword and thrusts savagely and repeatedly at Iago with.

Villainy, villainy, villainy!

Constance disarms Iago, knocks him down and is poised to skewer him

May thy pernicious soul rot half a grain a day!

She raises her sword to strike, but Desdemona stops her

Desdemona

Hold!

Desdemona helps Iago to his feet. He glares at Constance, shaken

'Twas all in sport.

Constance

Oh.

Iago

Ay.

Constance

Gee. I'm sorry. Im - here's your sword
back and everything... Have fun.

Dear God, I could have murdered that poor man.

I saw a flash of red before my eyes.

I felt a rush of power through my veins.

I tasted iron blood inside my mouth.

I loved it!

Constance faints

Desdemona

If she be false, heaven mocked itself.

Holding her sword at Iago's throat

Wretch, be sure thou prove my friend a villainess!

Be sure of it; give me the ocular proof -

Iago manages to take the Manuscript page from his shirt

Iago

Yet be content!

Desdemona

Make me to see't

Iago thrusts the page under her nose

What's this?

Iago

The pedant's fool's cap writ in Turkish code, found by my wife in your underwear drawer!

Desdemona releases Iago

Desdemona

Damn her, lewd spy! O damn her, damn her, O!

Iago

O, 'tis foul in her.

Desdemona

And to lie with my husband!

Iago

That's fouler.

Desdemona

Fool's cap - confession - fool's cap - to confess then die -
First to die, then to confess -

*Desdemona is about to fall prey to apoplexy when Constance wakes up
and picks something off the hem of Desdemona's dress*

Constance

My Brownie wings! What are they doing here?
I thought I threw them in the garb...age. Oh.

Desdemona

She may be honest yet. I'll try her once
in fairness. Then I'll chop her into messes.

Desdemona impales the foolscap upon the point of her sword

Constance

Hey Desdemona! Look what I just found.
My Brown Owl wings!

Iago

An owl stands for a witch!

It is the shape that Hecate takes at night.

Desdemona

I know who thou art. And I saw what thou didst.

Constance

You mean you've found out who I really am?

Desdemona nods

Who?! Who?! Who?!

Iago

The owl's cry!

Desdemona points her sword with the foolscap at Constance's face

Desdemona

Here is the sword of justice. If this be thine, read the verdict and reveal thyself.

Constance

It certainly looks like the real McCoy.

Constance plucks the foolscap off the sword

It is! Page one! I must be getting warm.

"Thou'rt cold, and Cyprus is too hot for thee.

Seek truth now in Verona, Italy;

there find a third to make a trinity,

where two plus one adds up to one not three."

Hm. How strange.

Warp effects. Constance starts to be pulled off. Desdemona grabs her by the skirt. When the warp effects are over, all that remains of Constance is her skirt which is speared onto Desdemona's sword

Desdemona

The pedant hath by magic disappeared
to fly unto her evil genius, Brown Owl.
When she returns with fresh enchantments here,
then must the cause of justice claim her life.
How shall I kill her Iago?

Iago hands Desdemona the pillow

ACT 3

Scene 1

Verona; a public place.

Mercutio and Tybalt are about to fight. Romeo looks on, horrified.

Mercutio

Tybalt, you ratcatcher, will you walk?

Tybalt

I am for you.

Romeo

Gentle Mercutio, put thy rapier up.

Mercutio

Come sir, your passado!

They fight. Constance enters, minus her skirt, now wearing just her longjohns, boots and tweed jacket

Romeo

Hold, Tybalt! Good Mercutio!

Romeo is about to fatally intervene in the sword fight

Constance

One Mona Lisa down, and one to go.

She tackles Romeo. They fly into the sword fight, knocking Tybalt and Mercutio aside. Tybalt and Mercutio jump to their feet and immediately point their swords at Constance while Romeo sits on her

Mercutio

Shall I lance the pimple? Or rub the quat to bursting!

Tybalt

Name the house that whelped thee pup!
What kennel loosed thee hence to interfere
with honour's reck'ning?

Romeo

Stay! You fright the
wretch.
Speak, boy...speak boy.

Constance

Boy?

A moment of decision. She clears her throat to a more masculine pitch.

From Cyprus washed I here ashore,
a roving pedant lad to earn my bread
by wit and by this fountain pen, my sword.
A stranger here, my name is Constan-tine.
I couldn't let you kill each other for,

young Juliet and Romeo have wed;
and by th'untying of their virgin-knot,
have tied new blood betwixt you cousins here.
Tybalt, Romeo is your cousin now,
in law, and so you fellows shake hands.

A dangerous pause, then Tybalt turn to Romeo and embraces him

Tybalt
Cousin Montague!

Romeo
Kindred Capulet!

Mercutio and Tybalt embrace Constance in turn with:

Tybalt
Fortunate harbinger!

Mercutio
Madcap youth!

Romeo
Brave Greek!

Romeo embraces Constance, but lingers a little too long with:

Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, nay!
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this day!

Mercutio
Now we have put our angry weapons up,
let's hie to Mistress Burnbottom's to put up
and to sheath our jocund tools of sport.

Lewd Renaissance gestures and laughter through the following dreadful jokes

Tybalt

A bawd! And falling apart with'th'pox! Take care -
She'll pay thee, and with a French crown too!

Mercutio

Ay, a bald pate, for a little head!

Tybalt

I'd as lief to pluck a green maid off the street.

Mercutio

Thou'dst feel that green fruit yerking in thy guts,
when that her kinsfolk 'venged her maidenhead!

Tybalt

She'd never know who'd had her maidenhead,
for I would pass as quickly through the wench,
as any fruit so green, would pass through me!

Laughter - Constance nervously bites her thumbnail

Do you bite your thumb at me sir?!

Constance

No! I just bite my nails, that's all.

Tybalt

Do you bite your nails at me sir?!

Constance

No I swear! Look, I'll never bite them again. This'll be a great change for me to quit once and for all. Thanks.

Pause. The boys tense. Will there be a fight?

Tybalt

You're welcome

Romeo

Now t'th'baths, new friendship to baptize!

Mercutio & Tybalt

T'th'baths, t'th'baths!

Romeo

Come

Greekling, splash with us!

Romeo, Tybalt, and Mercutio hoist Constance onto their shoulders

Constance

No, wait! I can't! I had a bath today.

What's more, I've got a lot of things to do;

I have to buy a lute, a sword, some hose,

and teach a class or two before it's noon,

in time to see a man about a horse.

Romeo

I'd see thee mounted well in stallion flesh.

Beware thou art deceived not in a mare.

Romeo, Tybalt and Mercutio exit

Constance

Thank God they think that I'm a man. Thank
you. O thank you.

How long can I avoid their locker room?

Those guys remind me of the Stratford shows I've seen,
where each production has a Roman bath:
the scene might be a conference of state,
but steam will rise and billow from the wings,
while full-grown men in Velcro loincloths speak,
while snapping towels at each other.
Why is it Juliet's scenes with her Nurse
are never in a sauna. Or King Lear:
imagine Goneril and Regan, steaming
as they plot the downfall of their Dad,
while tearing hot wax from each other's legs;
Ophelia, drowning in a whirlpool full
of naked women. Portia, pumping iron -

A woman screams within. Male laughter

I want to go home.
I want to see my cats. I want to read
Jane Eyre again and never leave the house.
Where's the Fool? Where's the damn Fool?!
How come I end up doing all his work?
I should have waited in the wings
for him to leap on stage and stop the fight,
and then I could have pinned him down
and forced him to reveal the Author's name!
The Author - who must know my true identity.
The Author! who - I have to pee...
There must be a convent around here somewhere.

Exit Constance

Joanna

*Thank you for tuning into this episode of the UTSC Drama Society's
Summer Reading Series. Thank you once again to all of our amazing*

readers and don't forget to check on our Instagram to vote on which show you'd like to see us produce at the beginning of the season. Catch ya' next time.