

Bill's Back

A Play in Two Acts

by

Gene Kato

BILL'S BACK

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ACT 1

SCENE 1

THE SCENE:

The plain looking apartment of BARRY PLUMBER, aspiring young playwright. To look around, this place looks like that of a young writer that has had many a frustrating afternoon racking his brain for the smallest fragment of an idea that could lead him to Broadway . . . or beyond. There is a loft bed, a small sofa, one chair that gets moved all over the place, a small area that serves as a kitchen, numerous bookshelves, a closet, a very skinny door that leads off into the bathroom, and a small desk with a typewriter on it. The entire apartment is covered in half-typed pieces of typing paper that came from the 3,000 ideas that have popped up . . . only to live a very few minutes in the typewriter.

AT RISE:

It is about 3:00 a.m. The stage is quiet for a few seconds. Suddenly, a figure sits up in the loft bed and we hear the thud of feet hitting the floor.

BARRY. *(Clicking on the light)* I have it! Finally, after all this time! I HAVE IT!

SHANNON. *(Sitting up in bed)* Jesus, Barry! I was asleep! You scared the shit out of me!

BARRY. *(Making his way to his desk)* I'm sorry, Honey. I was just lying there and it hit me! The perfect idea for a story!

SHANNON. That's great. Now, come on back to bed.

BARRY. I can't sleep. Not now. I've been floundering for weeks.

SHANNON. Barry, it's three in the morning.

BARRY. I know – but inspiration has no timetable. You know that.

SHANNON. Yeah, I get that. But 3:00 a.m.? Can't you just write the idea down and work on it tomorrow.

BARRY. No way. Not a chance. I might not remember it. Gotta strike while the iron is hot and all of that. This is it, Babe! The ticket to fame and fortune. I'm going to get this one out on paper. Glitz and glamour, here we come!

SHANNON. (*Unamused*) That's Terrific. Goodnight. (*SHANNON lies back down*)

BARRY. Oh, come on! Where's that adventurous spirit? Don't you want to share this moment with me?

SHANNON. No.

BARRY. No? What do you mean, No? Why not? (*No answer*) Come on! It's a great time! It's a magic time!

SHANNON. It's late!

BARRY. I've got an idea! I'm really inspired!

SHANNON. I've got a day job! I'm really tired!

BARRY. (*Putting paper into the typewriter*) Come on, let me at least tell you my idea. Please? (*There is a long pause. SHANNON sits up*)

SHANNON. Alright. Tell me. I'm listening.

BARRY. Really?

SHANNON. I'll never get any sleep, otherwise. I'm all ears.

BARRY. Do you really want to know?

SHANNON. I really do.

BARRY. Really?

SHANNON. BARRY! TELL ME! I NEED SLEEP!

BARRY. It may be just me, but I'm sensing a little hostility from you. (*SHANNON hurls a pillow at BARRY*) Ok, there's this man who owns a fish factory. The guy is really in dire straits and a building contractor comes in and tells him that he is there to build a wall around the city. Problem is, the city line cuts right through the center of the fish factory and the man has to either let the wall run through his factory, or take the city to court and try to get the boundaries changed. Pretty good, huh? What do you think? Little

bit of drama. Slice of life type of thing? You know? Well? It's just an idea. I don't know. Needs work. Maybe it's a little weak. You think? Un puquito? A little bit? Maybe? I don't like it. It stinks! I'm going to forget the whole idea. Silly. Goodnight.

SHANNON. That's it?

BARRY. That's all you have to say? That's it? What kind of response is that?

SHANNON. It sucks. (*Long pause*) No, I didn't mean to say that. I'm tired, Barry. It's workable.

BARRY. That's just a polite way of saying you hate it. Workable or unique. If it's workable or unique, then you know it stinks.

SHANNON. Barry, you're putting words in my mouth.

BARRY. Well, at least I know where to find them when I'm ready to put them on paper.

SHANNON. Oh, stop it! It's too late for this! I want to go to bed. Think on it some more!

BARRY. I can't sleep! How many times do I have to tell you that? I want to get an idea working!

SHANNON. Barry, I seriously doubt that you will be able to write an entire play tonight. You know how this works. You have to be inspired. I have a feeling that Shakespeare didn't write *Hamlet* in an entire evening. It took a little time to grow.

BARRY. That's different. Shakespeare is different. No one writes like that. Act after act after act after act after act . . .

SHANNON. Ok, I get the point. Shakespeare you're not.

BARRY. Thank you.

SHANNON. I didn't mean it like that.

BARRY. Oh, don't worry. I didn't take offense by that. Actually, I took it as a compliment.

SHANNON. I don't follow you.

BARRY. Shakespeare sucks. (*There is a clap of thunder. Rain starts to fall*)

SHANNON. Great, now I'll never get to sleep. I hate rainy nights.

BARRY. The last thing that I want to be is compared to William Shakespeare. Artsy fartsy panty hose wearing - what do you call him?

SHANNON. A Bard.

BARRY. Right. Bard. Whatever. I don't want to be like him.

SHANNON. You don't want to be like Shakespeare? Why? I would think that any playwright would jump at the chance to be compared to William Shakespeare. Isn't his stuff the most produced in the world?

BARRY. No. You're getting Shakespeare confused with Neil Simon. Besides, the man is dead. I am living, there's a big difference.

SHANNON. Oh, right. I'm sorry. I completely forgot about the living playwright. When is the Barry Plumber festival of plays going to be presented? I forgot to write the dates down.

BARRY. There is no need to take cheap shots at me. You just wait and see, Babycakes! One day everyone will know the works of Barry Plumber. I am going to be an important new voice in the theatre. People are going to listen to what I have to say. I'm not going to cram sub-text down people's throats like Ibsen, I'm not going to write in confusing prose or verse like the Bard. Unlike Chekhov, my characters are going to listen to one another and do something about their sad plights in life. I won't write for the joke, like so many modern day comics do. And last, but certainly not least, I won't get so heavy and melodramatic that my audience will want to commit communal suicide in the parking lot. That's my plan. What do you think of that?

SHANNON. Your scripts will be lonely.

BARRY. Ducky. Just ducky, Shan. What are you trying to do? Kill my self esteem completely?

SHANNON. No, but you seem to be going nowhere with this. Every day it's "I have it! I have it!" No, you don't have it. You can't force a play out. You spend more time trying frantically to write something that all you have is surface ideas that go nowhere. Any good play, story, whatever; has to be good to you first. You have to enjoy what you're doing. Don't worry about whether other people are going to like it. Something good will come out of it. Nothing is totally bad. Everything has some good in it. Write for yourself first, the world second.

BARRY. I need to be recognized.

SHANNON. You need to take a valium and get some sleep. Again,

I refer you to the clock. It is after 3:00. (Pause. SHANNON begins to get dressed) Look, I think I'm going to go back to my apartment tonight. You are obviously not interested in going to bed, so I'll just see you tomorrow.

BARRY. I didn't mean to . . .

SHANNON. (*Overlapping*) I know. No offense taken. You just need time to ponder, or whatever it is you writers do.

BARRY. Do you want me to walk you to your door?

SHANNON. Barry, I just live across the hall. I think I'll be fine.

BARRY. Shannon, don't leave. I'm stuck. I need you to be here to help me.

SHANNON. You don't need me here, Honey. You just need to stop, breathe, and go back to the basics.

BARRY. I don't follow you.

SHANNON. In your desk drawer is a book that I bought you for Christmas a few years back. Take it out, read a little, and then try to write.

BARRY. I know what book you're referring to, that's why it's in a drawer.

SHANNON. Give it a shot. You may learn something valuable from it. (*She exits. BARRY looks around the apartment, then goes and sits at the desk and prepares to write. He loads a piece of paper into the typewriter and sits there looking at it . . . for about thirty seconds. He gets up and goes to the refrigerator and pours himself a glass of orange juice. He begins humming and sits down at the typewriter again and looks at the blank page. He picks up a pencil and begins tapping it on the desk and surrounding area. The thunder claps again. BARRY jumps at the sound. He finally, looks into the desk drawer and pulls out a rather nice-looking volume of the complete works of Shakespeare and starts flipping through it. He stops at one of the plays and makes a disgusted grumble and closes the volume, throws it back into the drawer, and resumes his non-writing position. He plunks one letter and looks at it . . . dumbfounded*)

BARRY. X?! What first word of a play starts with X?! (*He rips the page out and makes it into an airplane and flies it*) This is ridiculous. I just need a germ of an idea. An amoeba. Something!

(Thunder crashes) I'm not going to read that book. *(Thunder crashes)* No! *(Thunder crashes. Lights flicker)* No! *(Thunder crashes. He looks up)* Is someone trying to get my attention? Forget it! I will not bow to the Bard! *(Lights go out. Thunder crashes. Lightning flashes)* OK! OK! OK! I have the book! I'm reading! It's open and the poetry is flowing. *(Lights come up and rain stops)* See? *Away, I say! Now by the Gods that warlike Goth's adore, This pretty Brabble will undo us all!* What the hell does this mean? Now by the Gods that warlike Goth's adore? How am I supposed to become inspired by something that I can't understand?! I love *my* writing and I don't have time to sift through this . . .crap! *(He throws the book into the desk drawer and turns the light off and crawls into the bed. We hear the clock ticking.)*

VOICE. Alas that Love, whose view is muffled still. *(BARRY leaps from the bed and clicks on the light. No one is in the room)*

BARRY. Who is that? *(No answer)* Someone is in here. I heard you. Now show yourself! *(Silence. BARRY looks all over the room. Seeing nothing, he decides to go back to bed)* Ok, I'm going back to bed now. *(He clicks off the light)*

VOICE. I have heard, but not believed, the spirits o' the dead May walk again. *(BARRY clicks on the light and standing in front of him is a man that looks exactly like WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE. BARRY stands there, flabbergasted)*

BARRY. You . . .?

SHAKESPEARE. Why dost thou dribble thy tongue so much as to make winds of words so foul?

BARRY. What?

SHAKESPEARE. Dost thy ears swell from infection? I heard thee tell that "Shakespeare sucks". Didst thy words fly forth with malicious intent? Or was there some kinder, gentler, more fair meaning to thy description? Was 't but folly beneath thy strangling speech?

BARRY. Look, Buddy, I have no idea what you're saying. I'm impressed . . .but, not amused. Now, what in the hell are you doing in my apartment? No, wait. First, who are you?

SHAKESPEARE. I am he whom I appear to be.

BARRY. Uh-huh. I suppose you really expect me to believe that

you are Christopher Marlowe.

SHAKESPEARE. Not in form, voice, or in essence of mind.

Allow me to make thine acquaintance. Thou wouldst know me as William Shakespeare. (*Long pause. BARRY stares at SHAKESPEARE*)

BARRY. Shakespeare?

SHAKESPEARE. 'Tis true.

BARRY. William Shakespeare?

SHAKESPEARE. 'Tis still true.

BARRY. Bard? Poet? Playwright? Dead?

SHAKESPEARE. Truth lives an eternity. However, thine own life is but a falling tear doomed to expire at the passing of the last wrinkle off the edge of thine own constituted surface.

BARRY. WHAT?!!! I'm having a real hard time understanding you. Would you please drop the charade here and just give me some straight answers. Please? (*SHAKESPEARE nods*) Now, who are you really?

SHAKESPEARE. William Shakespeare.

BARRY. No, I mean really.

SHAKESPEARE. William Shakespeare.

BARRY. Ok, you're going to hold to that, huh? Fine. Can you prove it?

SHAKESPEARE. I couldst.

BARRY. Ok. Then you wouldn't mind too much if I tested you then? Since you are the Great Bard of Great Britain? If you are who you say you are, then I should truly count my blessings to have a dead Bard in my living room. Oh, what a great day this should be? Don't you agree? I'll just ask you a little question about one of your plays. How's that?

SHAKESPEARE. So great a day as this is cheaply bought. I shall undertake thy test. No corruption blackens my speech. Play on.

BARRY. (*Opening up the anthology*) What is the quote on page 235, line 146?

SHAKESPEARE. But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?

BARRY. Page 1746, line 2?

SHAKESPEARE. Give us a light there! Ho!

BARRY. (*Irritated*) Page 86, line 92?

SHAKESPEARE. Why dost thou spit on me?

BARRY. Page 1009, line 30?

SHAKESPEARE. Now by the Gods that warlike Goth's adore, this pretty Brabble will undo us all. Wouldst thou like for The Bard to give thee a description most proper of his text?

BARRY. (*Long pause. BARRY slams the book closed*) Ok. So, you know the answer. Fine. The question was clearly too easy! (*Pause*) Look, Mr. . . .Shakespeare, what do you want?

SHAKESPEARE. Mine ears did come upon an insult whose direction was pointed towards the Bard.

BARRY. Are you trying to say that you're upset because I insulted William Shakespeare? Is that what it is, Mister?

SHAKESPEARE. Are not Mister and William Shakespeare one in the same?

BARRY. Look, I really think that this whole charade is amusing. However, you are still a stranger in my house. So, I'm afraid that if you really have nothing important to say to me. I'm just going to be forced to politely tell you to get out of my house. I'm tired. I need sleep. You don't belong here. Things like that are creeping into my brain. You understand? (*SHAKESPEARE nods*) Good. I'm not trying to be rude. I'm a playwright. I need sleep to be able to create.

SHAKESPEARE. Slumber never did a good play create.

BARRY. Yeah, well lack of slumber always a worthless playwright makes. So, there. Now, will you please leave (*SHAKESPEARE sits*) HEY! BUDDY! TAKE A HINT! SCRAM!

SHAKESPEARE. Thou hast a most inhospitable nature. Didst thy parents fail to instruct thee in etiquette most proper?

BARRY. You're a nut.

SHAKESPEARE. Neither pecan, nor walnut can describe the nut that reflects in thy ways. Thy shell needs to be cracked to free the raw spirit of cruelty that infects thy being. O to be that nutcracker that opens up that shell to make for exhibition a new nut for the world to admire. In plays that thou write should be verse and song to make women swoon with love. For love and passion is what, above the carpenter and baker makes the poet. Thou knows not about what to put quill to paper. Thy mind is a labyrinth of which

there is no light or map. Let myself be thy guide to light, thy map to peace of mind. Consider thyself none other than Hamlet, doomed to destruction because of confusion and hesitancy. Would'st thou accept the offer I have given?

BARRY. (*Laughing*) Hold on just a second. Let me get this straight. You want to teach me how to write a good play? Am I right?

SHAKESPEARE. 'Tis true.

BARRY. (*Smiling, yet dripping with sarcasm*) What an absolutely egotistical proposition. Do you know who I am? I've never met you before in my life. How do you know me? I know how to write a play. I do not need any Joe Blow off the street to come into my apartment and tell me how to do my craft. Is that understood? *I MEAN, WHO IN THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?!*

SHAKESPEARE. William Shakespeare.

BARRY. You are not William Shakespeare! William Shakespeare is dead! He died a long time ago! You may look like him. You may talk like him. You cannot, however, *be* him! I'll believe that you're a freak case! I'll believe that you're a practical joke! But, I'm not going to believe that you're actually William Shakespeare! He's dead! DO YOU HEAR ME? DEAD! DEAD! DEAD! Now! Who are you?

SHAKESPEARE. William Shakespeare.

BARRY. Ok, that's it. Get out of my house. (*BARRY goes to the door and opens it*)

SHAKESPEARE. Would'st thou throw me to the dogs?

BARRY. Leave! (*SHAKESPEARE sighs, gets up and walks to the door. With one last glance at BARRY, he exits. BARRY shuts the door and locks it*) What a mental case. (*He closes the door and locks around the room at the paper scattered everywhere and sighs to himself. After a second or two, he clicks the light off and gets back in bed. There is silence for a few seconds.*)

SHAKESPEARE'S VOICE. Hast thy brain had time to ponder upon the request and reach a better suited solution?

BARRY. (*Clicking on the light*) How in the hell did you get in here?!

SHAKESPEARE. *Apparitions are funny things*

*Elusive are they to commoner and king
Through the artists dreams they skip and weave...*

BARRY. But when they appear in waking hours . . .

SHAKESPEARE. *Seldom will they leave.*

BARRY. There is absolutely no way that you could have gotten back in here. I locked the door. I was with me when I did it.

SHAKESPEARE. Not so tight as that which locks thy mind. 'Twill do thee no good to refuse me. Thy name is nothing. Thy reputation is nothing. If thee make refuse of mine offer most kind, then thy career will be stripped to nothing but gobbets for the mouths of vultures. I pray you, do not boast of success not found. For in this world, thou art but a fool longing for meed. If thy prognostication were known to thee, 'twould be a shocking revelation to learn of.

BARRY. You really are William Shakespeare, aren't you?

SHAKESPEARE. 'Tis true.

BARRY. Ah, SHIT! I hate William Shakespeare! This is just great! I spend my entire life avoiding your plays and now I have to entertain your spirit until you get good and ready to leave! (Pause) You aren't going to do anything weird are you? Huh? Like possess me and make me do soliloquies at dinner parties? Are you? I don't think I could take that. Everyone knows that I hate you. Shannon likes you. I can't stand the ground . . .you're . . .buried . . .in. This is terrible. Do you know what this reminds me of? Huh? I read a play last week called *I Hate Hamlet*. Great play. Great title. I wrote the playwright and told him how great the play was. Paul Rudnick. Nice guy. Anyway, I thought to myself, this is really funny. How would I react if a ghost showed up at my house? WELL I DIDN'T EXPECT TO FIND OUT!!!

SHAKESPEARE. Dost thou have this play, *I Hate Hamlet*?

BARRY. (Pause) Yes. Of course I do. Why?

SHAKESPEARE. I wouldst like to read it. If about Hamlet it claims to be, then 'twould be most appropriate for mine own eyes to read.

BARRY. Terrific. Ghost of Shakespeare wants to read my plays.

SHAKESPEARE. Not plays from thine own brain plucked prematurely, but well seasoned plays that are from thine own present day Bards.

BARRY. They are not Bards, they are playwrights. The word Bard is no longer used, except when we are referring to you. Got it?

SHAKESPEARE. Wouldst thou deliver the play most fine?

BARRY. Ok! I'll give you the play! (He gets a copy of *I Hate Hamlet* and gives it to SHAKESPEARE) Here! ENJOY IT! (Pause) I thought you were going to help me!

SHAKESPEARE. Patience is a virtue. I will read thy play tomorrow.

BARRY. Ok, that's fair enough. (*SHAKESPEARE opens the script up and reads. BARRY stares at him for a second. SHAKESPEARE starts to giggle. BARRY rolls his eyes and goes over and gets some orange juice. SHAKESPEARE laughs a little harder. BARRY stares at him again. SHAKESPEARE falls out into a full belly laugh. BARRY gets a very angry look on his face. He downs the orange juice and gets into bed. He rolls over and tries to get some sleep. SHAKESPEARE'S laughter gets louder and louder. Finally, BARRY can take it no more and sits up in bed and yells.*) I THINK IT'S GREAT THAT YOU'RE HAVING SUCH A GREAT TIME! BUT I NEED SLEEP! SO PUT THE PLAY UP OR I'LL BURN IT! I CAN'T STAND THIS!

SHAKESPEARE. Thy nerves are in a bunch.

BARRY. Yes! They are! You spent all that time telling me that you wanted to help me. Then, you go and read another playwright's play.

SHAKESPEARE. The play was good.

BARRY. *OF COURSE THE PLAY IS GOOD! IT'S PUBLISHED! IT'S BEEN TO BROADWAY! WHAT DO YOU EXPECT?! ABSOLUTE SCHLOCK?!*

SHAKESPEARE. What is this Broadway and why wouldst Shylock be on 't?

BARRY. Not *Shylock*, SCHLOCK! SCHLOCK! SHHHHLOOCK!

SHAKESPEARE. There is an urgency in thy need for sleep.

BARRY. If you want to read something, read one of my plays. Here. Take this one! (*Hands SHAKESPEARE a bound manuscript*) Everyone hates it anyway! (*Laughs maniacally*) See if you can fix that one.

SHAKESPEARE. (*Looking at the title*) *An Incident In Iowa?*

BARRY. Read it! It's a comedy! Read it now! (*BARRY jumps onto the bed and stares at SHAKESPEARE. SHAKESPEARE looks at BARRY then opens the manuscript and begins to read. Silence. BARRY waits for the laughs, that never come. SHAKESPEARE'S eyes begin to tear up and he soon starts weeping. BARRY looks at him for a second and then screams.*)

BARRY. WHY ARE YOU CRYING? IT'S A COMEDY?!

SHAKESPEARE. Never . . .

BARRY. Never what? NEVER WHAT?!

SHAKESPEARE. Never have I found a play of which it's substance is so effectless.

BARRY. Yeah? So, why are you crying?

SHAKESPEARE. Thy play reeks of odious matter.

BARRY. You know. I would expect you to say that. You, who has a following. I may not have written Hamlet . . .

SHAKESPEARE. I assure thee, thou did'st not.

BARRY. I may not have written Hamlet, but I'm proud of what I've written. It's real easy for you to say that my play stinks because you have written successful plays, no matter how formula and generic they may be. Ok, let's start our relationship over. Hello, Bill. I'm Barry. And I'm your worst nightmare. I hate you. I have always hated you. I always will hate you. On the other hand, you will hate me before this is all over with. Of that, I can assure you. You see, Barry Plumber is determined to succeed. He has the will to make great things happen. So, stand aside and watch him fly. I may not be now, but I will be the superior playwright. I hear what you are saying, Bill. If I offended you by saying that you suck, well then, I'm sorry but I meant it. I still do. (*Pause*) Do you know what? I just realized something. In each other's eyes, we are the two worst playwrights in the world. You think my plays lack poetry, well they do because they are not poems . . .they're plays. What do you think of that, Bill?

SHAKESPEARE. Why dost thou keep calling out the name of "Bill" when thou knowest mine name is "William"?

BARRY. Quit worrying about petty things. I want to make you an offer. Since you hate my plays so badly I would like to make a little contest for the two of us.

SHAKESPEARE. Thy tongue wags with words of a most unknown nature.

BARRY. Simple. We both write a play. When we finish, we will send off the plays to producers. The first one produced is the superior playwright. If you win, I will burn all of my plays. If I win, you must admit that I am better than you and then leave me forever.

SHAKESPEARE. I came hence to give thee help, not as an enemy.

BARRY. I don't want your help. You insulted my work.

SHAKESPEARE. That insult to thy work was much justified and warranted.

BARRY. You still suck.

SHAKESPEARE. What does that mean in that context of speech? Suck? 'Twas foul enough from the grave to summon me. What does it mean?

BARRY. Welcome to my world, Bill. So, do you accept my challenge?

SHAKESPEARE. Thy challenge is accepted.

BARRY. Good. We begin tomorrow morning. Good night. Loser.

SHAKESPEARE. Endeavor thyself to sleep, and leave thy vain bibble babble. (*BARRY crawls into bed and rolls over*)

BARRY. Turn the light off, will you? You're dead. You don't require as much sleep as I do.

SHAKESPEARE. I require more. Rest well, for I shall haunt thy days tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow . . .

SCENE 2

AT RISE:

The scene is the same as before. It is four days later. There is now another typewriter in the room, placed there for our beloved MR. SHAKESPEARE to use. BARRY is pacing furiously around the room, glaring angrily at SHAKESPEARE, who is seated behind a typewriter, typing away like mad.

BARRY heads to the refrigerator to get a glass of orange juice. As he gets there, he is stopped by a pleased whimper from SHAKESPEARE, who takes a piece of paper out of the typewriter and places it onto a large stack of paper that sits on the desk beside him.

BARRY. (*Snotty*) What?

SHAKESPEARE. A script so fine in verse and form never have I written.

BARRY. That's just great. I'm glad to hear that. As a matter of fact, the cockles of my heart are growing warmer by the second. They'll be scorching hot in an hour! (*He gets in his face*) I'm happy for you.

SHAKESPEARE. 'Tis the play that should make thy cockles hot.

BARRY. *Well, I'm sorry! I'm a little dry today!*

SHAKESPEARE. The well of thy mind hast been dry for four days time. If thy words were to quench the thirst of the mind of man, then death would all of us consume.

BARRY. You love this, don't you?

SHAKESPEARE. At a loss, am I.

BARRY. Don't hand me that confused bullshit! You know *exactly* what I mean. You sit there typing away on your little typewriter, making a fool of me.

SHAKESPEARE. Only a play have I created, the fool thee created thyself.

BARRY. That's real clever. Tell me something. How did you learn to type so quickly? I only showed you the typewriter yesterday. (*SHAKESPEARE shrugs*) *You may have beaten me to the finish of the writing process, but* You still have to get it produced at that is going to prove to be harder than you think.

SHAKESPEARE. Not so hard. Mine name is bigger than a banshee. My own festival do I have. Why should I not have mine own festival do my work a just production?

BARRY. Bill, . . .!

SHAKESPEARE. William.

BARRY. Whatever. You are forgetting one really big thing.

SHAKESPEARE. O' thing. Thy tongue always wags of things! Thy thing would in the way get of my thing and each the other would play to the death. Drop thy precious game of things. Never should any man play with his thing.

BARRY. Yes, I've heard that said. Or you'll go blind. Be that as it may, you are dead. *DEAD!* That's something to consider. Rarely do dead playwrights get a chance to send in a new work.

SHAKESPEARE. Then let the dead break new ground. For days have I set out to uncover the plot most perfect in detail and description. Thine own worries of plots and paper has made thee subject to parry with he who has the perfect plot of page and plot of earth. (*SHAKESPEARE laughs*) *The Royal Shakespeare Festival.* The name is the stuff which dreams are made of.

BARRY. Oh, brother. What an ego.

SHAKESPEARE. A suggestion for the weary Bard to be. Let thy mind rest and do a filing of thoughts to make haste of that idea which will come forth to thy senses and make *the play*.

BARRY. Are you quite through?

SHAKESPEARE. Quite. The final page hast come to be born unto the world.

BARRY. *NO, I MEANT ARE YOU THROUGH YAKKING! NOT WRITING! (Pause) Wait a minute! You're finished?!*

SHAKESPEARE. Put to sight my new play. (*Presents the manuscript*) *A Midwinter's Night's Nightmare.* Next week I begin work on *The Tragedy of McDonald.*

BARRY. Wait a second. How many acts?

SHAKESPEARE. Five. Including Prologue and Epilogue.

BARRY. (*Stares at SHAKESPEARE*) You are a disgrace to the writers of the world! How dare you insult us by being so *creative!*

SHAKESPEARE. Do not bark as a canine barks when put into poundage. 'Twas thee that put me to the task of creating the play. I was in thy presence only but to help thee make thy penman skills better all the more. I hath seen the setting sun make haste to the horizon thrice plus one. Ears thee have none, or else thy ears are subject to some affliction and yearn for the soothing potion of an apothecary.

BARRY. Look, you're finished. Leave me alone. I need to think.

SHAKESPEARE. Yes. This evening shall I spend at a distance from thee. As thine own tongue hath spoken to mine ears "You make me want to barf!" (*BARRY goes to the door and opens it. SHANNON enters and SHAKESPEARE exits, simultaneously*)

SHANNON. Thanks. That was weird.

BARRY. GET OUT!...(He notices SHANNON)...of the hall!

SHANNON. What's the matter?

BARRY. What do you mean?

SHANNON. I know you better than that. (*Imitating BARRY*)
Hi.

BARRY. I didn't say it like that.

SHANNON. Oh, yes, you did.

BARRY. I did not.

SHANNON. You most certainly did, too. You sounded like a whipped bitch in an uphill dogsled race. (*BARRY stares at her*)

BARRY. Where do you come up with this stuff?

SHANNON. Simple. Born with the ability. (She sees the Shakespeare volume out on the desk) Oh, so you have been spending a little time with "him", huh?

BARRY. More than you realize.

SHANNON. I hope that you're getting something out of these plays, Barry. They're really wonderful, Honey. If you would just open up your mind and let the beautiful language flow across your senses, you might actually be surprised. It might be pleasant. I mean, God forbid you like something that's part of the foundation of the career you want so badly to be in. You know (*She sees SHAKESPEARE'S manuscript*) What's that?

BARRY. *Nothing!* (*Snatches the script up. More calmer*)

Um, nothing. It's just a little idea I had tumbling around in my head.

SHANNON. Can I see it?

BARRY. *NO!* I mean, no. It's way too early. It's just an idea. Nothing. This is scrap paper.

SHANNON. That's about five hundred sheets of paper, Kiddo. If that's *just* an idea, it's going to take an entire forest to give you enough paper for the play. That's not just an idea is it?

BARRY. (*Lying through his teeth*)Of course it is.

SHANNON. Come on, Baby. Let me see it. I just want a little peek. Please?

BARRY. No.

SHANNON. Just a peek? We artsy girls can do a lot with just a tiny bit.

BARRY. Absolutely not.

SHANNON. How about if I blow you?

BARRY. Maybe I'll let you see the title page.

SHANNON. I'm not going to leave you alone until you say yes.

BARRY. You know, I remember a time when I said the same thing to you and I was pestering you for almost a year. (*SHANNON walks over to BARRY and begins biting his buttons off*) Oh, stop it. Just, stop it. Please stop. I . . . just stop. No, I . . . *Oh, alright! I'll let you look at one page!*

SHANNON. Good. I knew I'd win.

BARRY. How did you know that? (She gestured to her chest) Great.

SHANNON. Hey, dominance is my game. (*She takes a piece of paper from the stack and reads*) This is strange.

BARRY. What do you mean? Strange.

SHANNON. What? You're trying to *copy* Shakespeare now?

BARRY. You don't like it?

SHANNON. It doesn't read very well. It's . . .

BARRY. Yes?

SHANNON. What else can I say? It sounds like you somewhere between mimicry and mockery.

BARRY. It does?

SHANNON. Unfortunately.

BARRY. (*Smiling*) Go on. (*SHANNON looks at BARRY*) Hey, I'm a rock. Hit me with your best shot.

SHANNON. I'm not that mean, Barry. (*BARRY nods*) I've hurt your feelings.

BARRY. No, really, you haven't. A writer needs to know these things, you know, how people feel about his work. Criticism is part of the game, you know? This is fascinating.

SHANNON. I can't pass any more judgment on your play, Honey. I've only read the first page.

BARRY. That's alright. I've heard all that I need to hear.

SHANNON. Are you sure that you're not angry at me? My criticism came off a little harsher than I intended.

BARRY. Of course not. Don't you know me by now? What kind of person would I be if I didn't value your opinion?

SHANNON. You'd be an asshole. (*BARRY stares at her*)

BARRY. Yes, that's . . .right. Um . . .yeah.

SHANNON. But you're not...most of the time. (*She smiles. They embrace*) I like that. (*They kiss passionately*)

BARRY. I like that.

SHANNON. I should hope so. Otherwise, I'd need to do some serious investigating of your "private" private life. You're not gay are you?

BARRY. What? What kind of question is that?

SHANNON. I know you writer types. You lead very seclusive lives. We average folk on the outside never really know what goes on when we aren't around.

BARRY. Stop it, stop it, stop it. (*SHANNON laughs*)

SHANNON. I love it when your eyebrows knit.

BARRY. Yeah, I know. Knock it off.

SHANNON. Is that an order?

BARRY. Yes. Now stop it!

SHANNON. I was just joking. God! *What crawled up your butt and died?*

BARRY. (*After glaring at her*)Please?

SHANNON. Barry, I was just kidding with you. Can't you take a joke? What happened to you? Did you get your period today or something?

BARRY. Nice change of direction this conversation is taking. .

SHANNON. Let me tell you something . . .

BARRY. (*Overlapping*)Oh, good an argument!

SHANNON. (*Continuous*). . .Buddy!

BARRY. That's Barry!

SHANNON. I don't take orders from anyone! Do you have that straight?

BARRY. Here we go!

SHANNON. Do you see any rings on these fingers?

BARRY. No, Eddie Murphy, I don't!

SHANNON. Neither do I. Why is that?

BARRY. *Because I haven't put any there! (SHANNON falls silent for a second. She wasn't expecting that answer.)*

SHANNON. That's right. You haven't. And after four years, I'm at a loss as to why. *(Silence)* Why, Barry?

BARRY / SHANNON. Because, the time is not right.

BARRY. *WELL IT'S NOT!*

SHANNON. *IT NEVER IS!* When is it going to be? Huh? Tell me that! What is a ring and a few vows going to change? I'm here every night anyway? What are you afraid of? Money? Is that the big problem? I've basically supported us for the past few years while you've done nothing but sat here and *pretended* to be a writer! I'd be happy to see just a title page!

BARRY. You just read a page out of a play . . .you hated it!

SHANNON. You didn't write that. You copied it from somewhere.

BARRY. How do you know that I copied it?

SHANNON. *Because it's written, Barry. You have forgotten how to write. I'm convinced of it. You're through. My advice to you is to go into retail!* Your play writing days are over before you've even begun. *(Silence)* Are you going to propose? Do you want this? Just . . .just tell me straight.

BARRY. *(LONG pause)* No.

SHANNON. *(Obviously hurt)* You're not?

BARRY. No. . .I'm not. I don't want to marry you. I can't.

SHANNON. *(Tears swelling)* *Oh, you don't want to marry me. What in the hell is that supposed to mean? You don't want me around every day? Huh? You sure don't seem to mind at night! What am I supposed to be? Your strap-on girlfriend?*

BARRY. Shannon, I . . .

SHANNON. *(Angry tears)* No, don't try to console me. Don't you dare even try! I don't even want an explanation. That will just make it worse. *(She starts to leave)*

BARRY. Shannon, wait!

SHANNON. I have. Waited. I've waited for a long time. I've been there for you. I've supported you. I've cooked for you. I've fucked you. I've given you a few years out of my life, and for what? To be told to my face, that you don't want to marry me.

BARRY. I didn't say that I never wanted to get married. Just not now! Please! Just give me a little more time.

SHANNON. How much more can I give you? *(She opens the door)* I'm growing tired of watching the calendars change. I won't wait forever. You never even say, "I love you" and sound like you mean it, anymore.

BARRY. Again, I say, I need a little more time.

SHANNON. I've given you plenty of time. You know, when I first met you, I thought that you were terrific. We had such fun. You were a playwright. I wanted so much to be in your world. I thought that I might have a life of glitz and glamour. New York City. All of that bullshit, you know? After a while, I started to see you make excuses as to why you weren't writing anything. You entered contests for awhile, remember that? You were rejected. So what? A little bad luck. I thought that you would try to improve your skills, you know? I thought after the harsh feedback you actually do something about and actually hone your skills! But, no! All you seemed to want to do was bitch and moan about the criticism and throw in the towel!

BARRY. If you hated it so bad, why did you stay?

SHANNON. *(Long pause)* Because I loved you.

BARRY. *(Long pause)* Loved? Past tense?

SHANNON. I don't really know if it's past tense or not, Barry. It feels like I fell in love with a completely different person. I really don't know you anymore. Do you? *(She exits. BARRY looks around the room. All of the papers of the plays he never wrote. He lets out a loud cry and goes wild and begins trashing his apartment. Finally, he collapses in a pile of his own failures. The paper is now everywhere. SHAKESPEARE enters and watches him quietly. BARRY looks up, but doesn't see him)*

BARRY. What have I done?

SHAKESPEARE. Thine own un-doing. *(BARRY whirls around and sees SHAKESPEARE.)*

BARRY. You scared the shit out of me!

SHAKESPEARE. Cut thine own prattle of speech! What dost thou need most? The gift of counsel? Or the gift of undergarments anew?

BARRY. Please!

SHAKESPEARE. I am sorry. (*Silence*) The words tumble through the air. Dost thou make excuse of me and accept mine humble apology?

BARRY. Look, forget it. I have more pressing matters to deal with.

SHAKESPEARE. Pressing matters? *Pressing matters?* Dids't thou hear what was just uttered forth from thy mouth?

BARRY. Yeah? So?

SHAKESPEARE. Thy speech had but a fragment of lyric to its composition? Thy words were made of a most double sound! Ssssssss and Tttttt! 'Twas almost a thing of beauty.

BARRY. Look, I'm gonna have to table the wager. I really am. (*SHAKESPEARE looks at him, confused.*) Quit. I'm quitting.

SHAKESPEARE. Is thine own worth so little? Dost thou truly wish to make the play inside thee die? Is thine own work of art no more than that of a fly whose life is to end by that of a great swatting? NO! NO! NO! How cans't thou stand before me and talk such worthless speech? Thou hast called myself *THE BARD!* If I am truly he whom thou hast said that I am, how can I turn my ears away from such . . .from such . . .*SINFUL SPEECH!* If that is how thou seest thyself, then thou art lower than a washwoman with a hole in thy bucket! Thou art truly a man of a most feminine nature!

BARRY. Are you calling me a woman?

SHAKESPEARE. Thou hast that quality of woman-ness.

BARRY. Look! Women are not the same as you remember them. They are no longer fragile and weak! Trust me on this one!

SHAKESPEARE. Then thou art a man. Poor man. In thine own time the man hast become the woman and the woman hast become the man. O' let the Bard be known as woman!

BARRY. (*Staring at him*) That's um. . .that's great, Bill. Look, you obviously are not going to help me. I can tell that by your little monologue there. So, why don't you just . . .fuck off.

SHAKESPEARE. Put to sleep thy thoughts of anger. Let slumber calm thy mind and create thy play. In the morn, all will be forgiven.

BARRY. (*Long pause*) Are you going to send off your play, tomorrow?

SHAKESPEARE. Do not burden thy mind with thoughts of Shakespeare. Let slumber caress thy soul. (*SHAKESPEARE exits.*)

BARRY turns off all of the lights except a small lamp. He undresses and gets into bed.)

BARRY. Bill, I'm going to leave the light on, just in case you want to work or something. *(Silence)* Bill, I'm sorry. *(Silence)* I just need to think of something to write! *(Silence. He rolls over and tries to sleep. Suddenly, he sits up and yells . . .)* I HAVE IT!

SCENE 3

AT RISE:

It is a week later. BARRY is seated at the typewriter, staring at it. SHAKESPEARE is walking around the room trying to master a yo-yo and a paddleball, simultaneously.

SHAKESPEARE. Impossible.

BARRY. I'm beginning to think so.

SHAKESPEARE. Why wouldst thy kinsman put to task themselves to create such a thing of which amusement is alak?

BARRY. *(Quickly)* I don't know. SHHH! *(Pause)* I'm trying to think.

SHAKESPEARE. My nose did think there was a smell of burning.

BARRY. That's um . . . very funny.

SHAKESPEARE. Why 'tis such a strain to put thy play to paper is a mystery most pressing. Dost thy fingers not have remembrance of how to write? Are they in slumber?

BARRY. Bill.

SHAKESPEARE. William.

BARRY. Whatever. Shutup. You're breaking my train of thought. *(Pause)* Forget it. It's gone. I had it and it's gone. *(Pause. He looks at SHAKESPEARE)* Did you finish reading my play?

(SHAKESPEARE nods) And . . .?!

SHAKESPEARE. *(Simply)* It sucks.

BARRY. Did you watch those movies that I asked you to? The old black and white space movies? You saw them, right?

(*SHAKESPEARE nods*) So, you know what I was making fun of, right? (*SHAKESPEARE nods*) You still didn't like my play, did you? **SHAKESPEARE.** Thy play sucked still. 'Tis true. I did enjoy the movies most.

BARRY. That's great! Look, do you think you could at least pay me the courtesy of saying *specifically* what you thought was wrong with it?!

SHAKESPEARE. The problems are many in number.

BARRY. *THAT STILL DOESN'T HELP ME!!* I need some sort of direction to go in.

SHAKESPEARE. 'T would be wise to take thyself to thy sink, drop thy play into 't, take forth from thy cabinet a match, and put thyself to the task of setting thine own words ablaze.

BARRY. You mean burn it. (*SHAKESPEARE nods*) *BURN IT?!!!* (*SHAKESPEARE nods*) Do you have any inkling of an idea how long it took me to think that play up and write it? Do you realize how long it takes to write a play? (*SHAKESPEARE nods*)

SHAKESPEARE. Four days.

BARRY. (*Ignoring him*) Burn it? (*SHAKESPEARE nods*)

SHAKESPEARE. Does mine head make noise like that of stuttering speech? Do not let thine anger kindle, rather take thy kindling to thy lesser work and make a match of the two. For that match could make thy play more of less. Less words, less paper, and even less of that form which gives life to 't. The flames would set thy mind at ease, thy foul play to fire, and to thy soul would that match give a most warm feeling. (*BARRY stares at him*)

BARRY. Ok. How about this? I'll make a little deal with you. I'll set my play on fire if you burn a copy of *Measure For Measure*. Fair enough? Do we have a deal?

SHAKESPEARE. (*Long pause*) Nay.

BARRY. Why not?

SHAKESPEARE. *Measure For Measure* is of truly good construction.

BARRY. Truly good construction? Your eloquent language is slipping from you, my friend. I just want you to burn your play. Don't worry. There are still billions of copies out there in the world. I just want you to burn one. Here. (*He takes a paperback copy of*

Measure For Measure from a bookshelf. *It looks perfect*) Here you go. Never even been opened. *(He gets a match and a trash can)* Go ahead. It's just words. *(He hands the book and the match to SHAKESPEARE)* Come on, Billy Boy. Light it up! It's just one copy! *(SHAKESPEARE sets the book and the match down)* What's wrong? Can't do it?

SHAKESPEARE. Nay.

BARRY. Not so easy when it's your own play is it?

SHAKESPEARE. Of that fact will the Bard . . . bow.

BARRY. Ok. So, until you are able to light a fire to your own stuff, don't tell me to burn what I have written. This may not be worthy of an award, but it certainly doesn't deserve to be roasted to a crisp. Even if it were, I wouldn't do it. I'm proud of it. I would just as soon set my foot on fire. You see, like my foot, this play is a part of me. No matter how many people hate it, despise it, mock it, and laugh at it, I still love it. You, of all people, should understand that. A play, like a fine wine, takes time to make. It must slowly take shape. Unfortunately, at some point, the things it's made out of are doomed to be trampled by someone and end up being run under foot.*(Pause)* The play may not be great. It may not even be good. It can, however, be better. You aren't the first person to hate my work. *(Pause)* Ok! You hate it! You're supposed to be so great. Well! Fix it! Even though words are our business, they're still cheap. *(Pause)* Even if they do come from William Shakespeare.

SHAKESPEARE. 'Twas as eloquent a speech as has ever been uttered.

BARRY. Don't patronize me.

SHAKESPEARE

Agaze I shall sit over thy sea of syllables, sounds, and sentences! A friendly look to make some salvage of thy story that hast taken great strains to bring forth into light.

BARRY. Thank you.

SHAKESPEARE. Where is thy play?

BARRY. *(Getting it)* Here.

SHAKESPEARE. Ahhh, the loom of thy brain once created this. Lovely it is to gaze upon the fruit of thy loom. *(Pause)* Has the mail arrived?

BARRY. You just sent your play off a few days ago. Be patient. You probably won't hear from the *Royal Shakespeare Festival* for months. (*There is a knock at the door*)

SHAKESPEARE. Knock! Knock! Knock! 'Tis true rap music mine ears behold. Is it thy lady?

BARRY. How do I know? The door is shut.

SHAKESPEARE. Hand me thy keys.

BARRY. Fine. Here. Go and check the mail. The world awaits to see you back safely from the empty mailbox. (*Another knock at the door*)

SHAKESPEARE. Knock! Knock! Knock!

BARRY. You are going to take a look at my script when you get back, right? For real? (*SHAKESPEARE nods*) Ok. (*BARRY opens the door. SHAKESPEARE runs out. SHANNON is standing in the hallway*)

SHANNON. Hello, Barry.

BARRY. Hi. Come on in. I was just . . .doing . . .nothing?
(*Beat*) How are you?

SHANNON. I'm not going to be here long. I have very little to say.

BARRY. Look, about the other day . . .

SHANNON. (*Overlapping*) Look, Barry, I really don't want to discuss it now. After all, it's been more than a few days. A whole week has gone by.

BARRY. I know.

SHANNON. I know you know. You know I know you know. I just don't know if knowing is enough, you know?

BARRY. I know.

SHANNON. Why so long apart, Barry? Why didn't you just call me? I sat by the phone all week just hoping it would ring. Just praying that it could all work out . . .like in the movies or something. We would talk and then I would run all the way across the hall and we would kiss and everything would be ok. I only live ten feet from you. I guess that's too far. Why didn't we talk this out?

BARRY. I didn't know how to talk to you.

SHANNON. *Oh, give me a break!* Can you hear what you are saying? *You* didn't know how to talk to *me!* Why not?

BARRY. I don't know.

SHANNON. We've been with each other for a long time, Barry. We have always been friends, lovers, and partners in this crazy life we've made together. Years. That's how long we've been at this. *Years!* All that time . . . (*Pause*) . . .and you close up on me now. It amazing how loud silence can be.

BARRY. I'm trying, Shannon.

SHANNON. No, I don't think so.

BARRY. Shan, listen to me. I'm working on turning myself around. Really. I've done a lot of thinking this past week . . .about us.

SHANNON. That's terrific. You *thought* about us. I'm so glad that you *thought* about us. You still didn't *do* anything about us.

BARRY. I've been busy.

SHANNON. Doing what? Thinking?

BARRY. I . . . (*Long pause*)

SHANNON. I have to go.

BARRY. No! Not yet! You didn't say what you came here to say, did you?

SHANNON. It doesn't really matter.

BARRY. Please! Don't go! If you're not gonna talk, then I am. Just a few more minutes? Please? (*SHANNON hesitates. Then sits*)

SHANNON. Ok, you're on again. Shoot.

BARRY. I've . . .I've been a real asshole, Shan. What you said the other day was right on the mark. Bull's eye. I've slipped away. From my work, my friends, from you . . .from myself. You have to believe me when I say that I'm working to fix that. I swear! I don't really like my life the way it is. I'm just lacking a little direction right now.

SHANNON. I could have told you that. (*Pause*) I'm sorry. That was out of line.

BARRY. I have this image of our future, you know? I want it to be perfect.

SHANNON. Yeah. Um...about that...it's...

BARRY. (*Overlapping*) I know. Look, in a few days . . .

SHANNON. (*Overlapping*) A few days?! You've had more than a few days!

BARRY. Yeah, but . . .

SHANNON. Are you going to need a few more after that? And then a few more still?

BARRY. I . . .

SHANNON. Day after day after day, Barry. Does it ever end? I feel like I'm running in a vacuum. Do you have any idea how that feels? Any idea at all? *(Pause)* It's lonely. I have been so lonely, Barry, for such a long time. I even started to say things that would shock you just to get you to pay attention to me. You never touch me anymore. There have been so many nights that I've just wanted you to hold me . . .and you didn't. Can I be honest with you? The sex has been terrible. I've faked so many nights hoping to trick myself into satisfaction. But, I just felt cheated. That was when we were still acknowledging one another. *(BARRY starts to say something)* I know. The play. Always the play. The wonderful savior play that's going to solve all of our problems and make everything right, forever. The play that is going to make you famous and get us out of here. The play that never gets written. I've waited for that play to get onto paper, forever, it seems. That was the play that was going to save our relationship. Isn't it ironic that it ended up being the thing that has hurt us the most because it doesn't really exist. *(Pause)* Your last play wasn't great. Everyone hates it. It is, however, written. It exists. *(Quieter. Tears start to swell up)* It exists. *(Pause. She collects herself)* What kills me the most is that in all of the years we've been waiting and struggling for you to catch lightning in a bottle - you never once realized that I never wanted to get out...*I WANTED TO GET IN!!!!* *(They look at each other)* I have to go.

BARRY. Things will get better, Shannon. I promise.

SHANNON. I want to believe that. Oh, Barry, there's nothing in the world that I would like to believe more than that. But, I really do doubt it. You are the way you are.

BARRY. Are you leaving for good? *(Silence)* Oh, god, Shannon! No! I didn't expect this! Don't go!

SHANNON. I can't stay with you.

BARRY. We can work this out! Please! I know that we can!

SHANNON. *(Long pause)* Last night, when you didn't call me, I thought we were through. That was it. It was over. I went to a bar.

I had a few drinks and I ran into your brother. I told him what was going on between us. That it was over. He said that it must be because you would never treat me like that if you were truly still interested in me. And you know what? He's right.

BARRY. No, don't tell me what I think you're going to tell me.

SHANNON. Tell you what? (She stares at him confused for moment) Wait a minute. You thought I was going to tell you that I...that your brother and I...? (*Pause*) Wow. I'm sorry to disappoint you, Barry - but nothing happened between me and the man I always thought would be my brother-in-law. (*Silence. She looks at BARRY*) He gave me something you are incapable of. Truth.

BARRY. We can work this out. Don't leave. I'm begging.

SHANNON. I know you are, Baby. And I know in my heart you really believe you can turn things around for yourself. I hope that's true. But turning things around for *you* comes at the expense of turning things around for *us*. I realize that now. (She starts for the door)

BARRY. *Don't do this to me, Shannon! I can be romantic! I'm reading Shakespeare now! I like it! Sort of! Don't go! I'm begging you! I want to be whatever you want me to be!*

SHANNON. There's the problem right there. You're so hung up on an image that you're no longer Barry...and Barry is what I need. Not some superficial success story. (*Pause*) I have to go. (*She crosses to the door*)

BARRY. *WILL YOU MARRY ME?! (She freezes. BARRY looks at her, pleading. She turns and we see tears in her eyes)*

SHANNON. I've waited so long to hear you ask me that. Why did you have to do it now?

BARRY. (*Gets on his knees*) Shannon, please. Marry me.

SHANNON. Don't do this. This was hard enough just coming over here and getting the words out of my mouth. I don't want our last few moments together to become stained with images of what might have been. Barry. It's not fair. Not to me. Not to you. And most certainly not to the history we've created together. For the longest time I wanted this and never got it. Don't mar that longing by acting out in desperation. I don't want our relationship to always be

associated with the feeling of panic. We would have had a great life together under different circumstances, but that's gone now.

BARRY. We can still have that if you'll just give me a chance.

SHANNON. Barry, you are my one great love in this world. But how do you tell the love of your life that you aren't *in* love with him anymore? (*She crosses to him and kisses him tenderly.*) I love you very much, but I just can't marry you. (*She looks at BARRY, then opens the door and exits. Simultaneously, SHAKESPEARE enters with the mail. He holds up an envelope, rips it open and reads. BARRY slumps into a chair, SHAKESPEARE does the same.*)

BARRY / SHAKESPEARE. I've been . . .*rejected!*

INTERMISSION

THE PLAY IS NOT OVER – IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS – PURCHASE A COPY THROUGH OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.NEXTSTAGEPRESS.NET