

ROMEO AND BEATRICE AND TOTO, TOO

A BACKSTAGE COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By **Claudia Haas**

Copyright © MMV by Claudia Haas

All Rights Reserved

Heuer Publishing LLC, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this work is subject to a royalty. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. All rights to this work of any kind including but not limited to professional and amateur stage performing rights are controlled exclusively by Heuer Publishing LLC. Inquiries concerning rights should be addressed to Heuer Publishing LLC.

This work is fully protected by copyright. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without permission of the publisher. Copying (by any means) or performing a copyrighted work without permission constitutes an infringement of copyright.

All organizations receiving permission to produce this work agree to give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production. The author(s) billing must appear below the title and be at least 50% as large as the title of the Work. All programs, advertisements, and other printed material distributed or published in connection with production of the work must include the following notice: **“Produced by special arrangement with Heuer Publishing LLC of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.”**

There shall be no deletions, alterations, or changes of any kind made to the work, including the changing of character gender, the cutting of dialogue, or the alteration of objectionable language unless directly authorized by the publisher or otherwise allowed in the work’s “Production Notes.” The title of the play shall not be altered.

The right of performance is not transferable and is strictly forbidden in cases where scripts are borrowed or purchased second-hand from a third party. All rights, including but not limited to professional and amateur stage performing, recitation, lecturing, public reading, television, radio, motion picture, video or sound taping, internet streaming or other forms of broadcast as technology progresses, and the rights of translation into foreign languages, are strictly reserved.

COPYING OR REPRODUCING ALL OR ANY PART OF THIS BOOK IN ANY MANNER IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN BY LAW. One copy for each speaking role must be purchased for production purposes. Single copies of scripts are sold for personal reading or production consideration only.

PUBLISHED BY

HEUER PUBLISHING LLC

P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406

TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011

ROMEO AND BEATRICE AND TOTO, TOO

By Claudia Haas

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(FOUR WOMEN, TWO MEN, TWO EITHER)

PETRA OR PETER QUINCE (m/f)... Middle-aged high school play director; Shakespeare scholar wanna-be. *(49 lines)*

HELENA DEMETRIA (f)..... Tall, sweet, ungainly wallflower, can't believe she's in a play! Plays **BEATRICE**. *(48 lines)*

BILL BOTTOM (m) Ham actor who believes he is truly terrific; strives to extol his vocabulary to the consternation of everyone else. Plays **ROMEO**. *(48 lines)*

FRANCES FLUTE (f) Music geek in her very first play; a little bit of a ditz. Plays **RUTH**. *(36 lines)*

ROBIN STARVELING (f) True 'Drama Queen.' Plays **JULIET**. *(38 lines)*

TOM TINKER (m)..... Jock who was blackmailed into joining the play. Plays **SEBASTIAN**. *(42 lines)*

SUSIE OR SAM SNUG (m/f)..... A true techie who does not want to be in a play. Plays small roles. *(30 lines)*

BY CLAUDIA HAAS

HERMIA LYSANDER (f)..... Small, powerful teen: “The mouse that roared.” Stage manager with a secret. (51 lines)

NOTE: Except for PETRA OR PETER QUINCE, the characters are high school-aged.

TIME: Present day

PLACE: A bare high school stage. Banner noting “ROMEO AND JULIET” could be present with JULIET crossed out and BEATRICE clumsily inserted. For the “play,” a curtain or drop cloth could be used as the “set.”

RUNNING TIME: Approximately 35 minutes

Perusal Only
Do Not Copy

AT RISE:

We are on stage in a high school theatre. There is a banner center stage displaying the sign, "ROMEO AND JULIET." JULIET is crossed out and "BEATRICE" is hand written over it. Next to the banner are a mop and bucket of water. In fact, there may be buckets all over the place. MS. PETRA QUINCE is trying desperately to hold the student's attention. HELENA is deep in script-study of Romeo and Juliet, biting her nails. FRANCES is off to the side alternately stretching and breathing. When she exhales, some musical notes soar through the air. ROBIN is standing guard over TOM who is tied up. ROBIN may be impeccably and trendier-than-thou dressed. SUSIE is fiddling with TOTO in a large wicker basket. BILL is showing off his various actor poses to SUSIE. HERMIA is off to the side watching everything closely.

MS. QUINCE: The play's the thing!

ROBIN: But *Romeo and Beatrice*????? What's wrong with good old-fashioned *Romeo and Juliet*? I want to play Juliet *not* this Beatrice-person.

HELENA: (*MEEKLY raising her hand.*) Uhhh, excuse me. If it's not too much trouble, I'll play Beatrice.

MS. QUINCE: May I please have your attention?

All keep on with what they were doing and basically ignore MS. QUINCE.

TOM: I'm NOT wearing tights.

ROBIN: If the director says "tights," you'll be dancing across the stage like a prima ballerina. You owe me big-time.

HELENA: Hello? Anyone? I'll wear tights.

MS. QUINCE: Please! Everyone! Can I have your attention?

Again, she is ignored. FRANCES' warming-up noises increase. ROBIN and TOM are arguing. BILL continues posing and loudly exclaiming "Juliet! Beatrice!" HELENA though is trying to pay attention and ingratiate herself. HERMIA quietly goes to MS. QUINCE'S side.

HERMIA: (*Out of her small stature comes a mighty powerful voice.*)

LISTEN UP! NOW!! (*ALL turn and look.*) Give it an understanding – BUT NO TONGUE! GET IT?

TOM: What did she say?

ROBIN: I think she's saying – like - be quiet or something.

MS. QUINCE: Yes. Well done. Most impressive, Hermia. Most. As you know, this year's contest play has been changed from cuttings of *Romeo and Juliet* to *Romeo and Beatrice*.

Amid groans and protestations.

There are many advantages here. To begin at the beginning, it is a play that stands on its own. No cuttings are necessary and to end at the end - - (*Barely being able to contain herself.*) - - we can rewrite history!

FRANCES: I didn't audition for the history club. I want to be in a play!

HELENA: I'll do a history play.

BILL: I don't care if Juliet or Beatrice or Brunhilda is in the title. Just give me Romeo.

MS. QUINCE: Please. Listen to my reasoning. As you all know, I have been from the beginning a staunch member of the WSWWSS which is the highly exclusive, "William Shakespeare Wrote William Shakespeare Society." We work at thwarting those horrid scholars who insist that Shakespeare did not write his plays. Now, we have a chance to extol to the world that not only did William Shakespeare actually write William Shakespeare, but in my hand is an example of what could possibly have been his earliest work, "Devise! Wit! Write! For I am whole volumes in folio!"

SUSIE: In English, please.

MS. QUINCE: Yes. Of course. One gets carried away with quoting the "Bard." Because of my membership in the WSWWSS, I have received - - (*She dramatically lowers her voice.*) - - a script that just may be an earlier version of *Romeo and Juliet*. And our

school will be the first to perform it! Just imagine the notoriety! The media frenzy! A world premiere of Shakespeare presented here in our own time. It makes me quite giddy to contemplate it! We will be famous! We will sell out and we will finally be able to build a proper theatre that does not leak every time it rains!

BILL: Let me just doublet-check something here. Romeo is still in? Right? I don't have to audition all over again? That would be a grief-filled time-baster.

MS. QUINCE: In truth, it is not the same Romeo. Auditioning may be appropriate.

SUSIE: But Toto is still in it, isn't she? You promised if I trained her, she could attack Romeo as he climbs Juliet's balcony!

BILL: I don't act with dogs! Why I believe William Shakespeare said, "Never enact with children or animals?"

SUSIE: But I spent a whole month training her! I promised her she could be in the play!

ROBIN: You want to put a *dog* in a Shakespeare play? You think Shakespeare wrote for *dogs*?

SUSIE and FRANCES coo at TOTO in the basket. Robin peers in.

Besides, look at her. She's fat! Toto's fat!

SUSIE: She's not fat! She's pregnant! I mean "with child" - - or rather "puppies."

TOM: Great! I got roped into doing a show with a pregnant dog!

MS. QUINCE: Yes, you are rather "roped" at the moment. Would someone please untie Tom. It doesn't do to hold students hostage in the theatre department. People already think we're strange.

ROBIN: He'll run! He's allergic to - tights or something. You said you needed more guys.

HELENA: I'll be a guy.

MS. QUINCE: I need male actors, yes. Not prisoners.

ROBIN: (*Untying him.*) You owe me. If you go anywhere, I'll tell the football coach, I wrote your last paper. You'll be off the team.

TOM: Yeah, okay.

MS. QUINCE: What was that?

ROBIN/TOM: Nothing.

BILL: Let's precede with the auditioning please.

SUSIE: Omigosh! I am *not* here to audition! I just want to do lights and go to cast parties. Do *not* put me on stage!

FRANCES: How about music? If we're adding a dog, could we add some music also?

MS. QUINCE: Music. I will consider that. Now for the auditioning - Susie, do not worry about the process. I have a lot of small parts where all you need to do is carry a sword.

SUSIE: Ohhh! A sword! Can I carry a dagger, too?

MS. QUINCE: Well, I suppose so. If it's a non-violent dagger. This is a school after all.

BILL: Okay, I'm ready. I have my onion and everything. Let's get this show on the street. I need to go to work.

TOM: Onion?

ROBIN: Bill never goes anywhere without his onion. It helps him to act. He gets all teary-eyed.

BILL: (*Taking a whiff of the onion, striking a pose and reading from the script.*) "If music - -

FRANCES: - - music! Right there! The perfect place for a song! I will note it!

BILL: Ahem! I'm acting! "If music be the food of love, plaaay on!" (*He strikes a new pose.*) "Give me excess of it, that surfff, uh, SURFING. The appetite may sicken and so die! DIE! DIE!" (*BILL dramatically falls to ground and cries and dies. Several times.*) AHH! That was lofty! I don't know what it means but who cares? We're here to act not write English essays.

MS. QUINCE: Yes - - very - - nice? Would anybody like to follow that dramatic performance?

ROBIN: I'm more than ready. You haven't seen anything yet! Give me the script. (*She grabs a script and furiously pages through it.*) Aha! I found her - you lied to me - Juliet is in the play! Now, where is that line? Where is the "Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo" line?

MS. QUINCE: Robin, this is NOT *Romeo and Juliet*. That line is not in the play.

ROBIN: Nevertheless, I will recite it. We will put it in the play.

HERMIA: You would rewrite a Shakespeare play?????

ROBIN: Shakespeare wrote that line! *(She throws away the script and proceeds. She punches up many words indiscriminately.)*

“Romeo, ROMEO, wherefore art thou ROMEO? DENY thy father and REFUSE thy name! OR - if thou WILT not - Be but SWORN my LOVE and I'll no longer be a CAPULET!” Now, THAT'S acting.

HERMIA: Yeah. Right. NEXT! Frances, have a go at Beatrice.

FRANCES: Who exactly is this Beatrice person?

HERMIA: The star.

HELENA: I'll read Beatrice.

HERMIA: Later, Helena. Later. Beatrice is the daughter of a lost explorer. She has just been shipwrecked and has washed ashore. *(FRANCES falls to the floor and rolls around.)*

MS. QUINCE: Uhhh - - Frances, what are you doing?

FRANCES: I'm finding my character's inner life. I call it “dramatic thinking.” If I physicalize my character, I become her inside. It's great - I don't even need the script!

At that, BILL takes his water bottle and squirts her.

Hey!

BILL: Just helping you with your dramatic thinking.

FRANCES: But I'm wet! I'm really wet! Isn't this theatre wet enough without you spraying actors with water?

HERMIA: NEXT!

HELENA: I'll have a go at it.

HERMIA: Later, Helena. Susie, why don't you try?

SUSIE: I just want to carry a sword. I'm only here for the cast parties, remember?

HERMIA: READ!

SUSIE: “What - - country - - friends - - is - - this?” *(She looks up from her script terrified.)* I don't know what I'm saying?

HERMIA: Really! It just means, “Where am I?”

SUSIE: Then, why didn't Shakespeare write that!

BILL: Listen, you don't have to understand Shakespeare to play him.
Just pronounciate loudly as if you know what you're talking about.
It doesn't matter if the audience gets it.

MS. QUINCE: Well, Bill, we ARE doing this for the audience.

BILL: My theory is each person in the audience thinks the other
person "gets" Shakespeare. So he or she makes-believe they're
"getting" Shakespeare too. But nobody "gets" it, get it?

TOM: Can we move on? Some of us have a life.

HERMIA: (*Shows MS. QUINCE her cast list.*) Well, I'm ready to cast
it.

HELENA: But, I haven't auditioned!

MS. QUINCE: Not to worry - there are parts for everyone.

ROBIN: I will play Juliet. (*She grabs a script and proceeds to count
her lines.*)

HERMIA: As you like it. Bill, you are to play Romeo.

BILL: Playing Romeo to Robin's Juliet will be like maiming a shrew.

ROBIN: And for my part, playing Juliet to Bill's Romeo will be love's
labour lost.

HERMIA: This is not *Romeo and Juliet*, remember? You are not in
love! Tom, you will be Sebastian.

BILL: Why, Tom and I are the two gentlemen of Venezia.

HERMIA: Frances, you are to be Beatrice.

FRANCES: I am Beatrice in *Romeo and Beatrice*? Thank-you! Oh,
thank-you! This is a midsummer night's dream come true!

HERMIA: (*To TOM.*) You will need to play various other small
parts - -

HELENA: Hello! I'm here! Does anyone know I'm here?

TOM: Such as - - ?

HERMIA: The nurse.

TOM: The NURSE! You want me - THE jock of the school to play - a
NURSE? I am worthy of playing kings! Titans!

MS. QUINCE: Yes well, you could play the nurse as a titan, Tom.
Just - - an androgynous one.

TOM: You want me to play a titan androgynous????

Pause.

ROMEO AND BEATRICE AND TOTO, TOO

MS. QUINCE: It could work.

HERMIA: We thought it would be funny. I can't wait to see you decked out as a nurse.

BILL: What a comedy of errors that will be!

TOM: No. It is much ado about nothing. Believe me. I will NOT play the Nurse.

HELENA: I'll play the Nurse.

HERMIA: Very well, Helena, you will be the Nurse. And Susie - you are to be all the other characters. Small parts, yes but integral to the play.

SUSIE: Do these characters carry swords?

HELENA: Do I have lines?

ROBIN: Hey! I only have about 20 lines! Why does Juliet have only 20 lines?

MS. QUINCE: My, look at the time. I need to run to class. Now, please study your script carefully. Tomorrow we begin to rehearse in earnest. And do remember, all the world is a stage and we are merely actors that play many parts.

BILL: Ms. Quince you are a genius. Did you hear what she said? And they say Shakespeare made up the really good lines!

All exit except for HERMIA and HELENA.

HELENA: Do you not know I exist? What was this audition all about?

HERMIA: Count yourself lucky, Helena that I skipped over you. By the time I am finished with this production, you won't want to be anywhere near it.

HELENA: Hermia - -

HERMIA: I am mute. I will not say another word.

HELENA: I can't believe you're working with Ms. Quince again - after getting kicked out of honor's English for plagiarizing - why she almost had you expelled!

HERMIA: And now it's my turn to have Ms. Quince expelled.

BLACKOUT.

AT RISE:

Bare stage. People are in various stages of inertia. Flirting, plugged into the latest high-tech music player, reading, anything but rehearsing.

MS. QUINCE: Friends! Castmates of *Romeo and Beatrice*, lend me your ears! We come to rehearse a play not to ignore it! If we continue in this vein, the play does not move forward. And we go up in two weeks time.

ROBIN: And we have yet to have a read-through of the play!

HERMIA: Okay, all. Get with your groups and practice! Rehearse! And don't trip over the mop buckets! You've got 15 minutes and then I want to see the first Act.

BILL and ROBIN get together. HELENA, SUSIE and TOM go off and rehearse. MS. QUINCE approaches HERMIA.

MS. QUINCE: All under control?

HERMIA: Absolutely.

MS. QUINCE: Did you order the costumes?

HERMIA: Yes, we're getting them from a local theatre. They're rented out so they won't be here until the day of the show.

MS. QUINCE: Isn't that cutting it a bit close?

HERMIA: They'll be fine. Don't you trust your own cast?

MS. QUINCE: Absolutely. But this is big Hermia. Truly big. We will be the center of the world as soon as the publicity hits and people find out we are debuting a new Shakespearean play. I want all my ducks in a row. Next year at this time we will be building a new theatre. All because of this play. Imagine! Working in a theatre that doesn't flood.

HERMIA: By the way, when do we get to proof the program?

MS. QUINCE: I just sent it to the printers. We should have a copy in about a week.

HERMIA: Isn't that cutting it a bit close?

MS. QUINCE: Don't you trust me Hermia?

HERMIA: Of course. *(And they both turn a bit away, back to back.)*

ROMEO AND BEATRICE AND TOTO, TOO

MS. QUINCE: (*Announcing.*) Keep working, all! I need to run to class. Listen to your Stage Manager, please.
As MS. QUINCE exits, TOM approaches HERMIA.

HERMIA: This is wonderful, Tom. All is going according to plan. I appreciate your help.

TOM: Don't appreciate it too much, Hermia. I am beginning to have second-thoughts.

HERMIA: Don't forget what that woman did to you, Tom! If it wasn't for me, you would have been kicked off the football team last year.

TOM: I appreciate you writing the paper for me Hermia. When can I stop owing you? If you think about it, writing the paper for me was not the best idea.

HERMIA: Why? You got a "B." I was clever enough to not get you an "A" and raise eyebrows.

TOM: I'm in honors with Ms. Quince now, Hermia. Don't forget, I got myself into honors. I'm not quite the hopeless dumb jock you thought I was.

HERMIA: Remember what she did to me! I'm NOT in honors, Tom. I almost got kicked out of school.

TOM: But that's because you got caught using a paper from the Internet.

HERMIA: Come on, Tom. You know I can write my own papers! I was going through - you know "stuff" at home and wasn't able to. There were extenuating circumstances.

TOM: And it was Ms. Quince who fought to keep you from getting expelled.

HERMIA: I didn't know that.

TOM: Well now you do. So, maybe it is time you put yourself wholeheartedly into this production instead of letting it flounder.

HERMIA: The production will be fine, Tom. People will flock to see a possible early Shakespearean play. It's Ms. Quince's teaching career I am trying to end.

Lights change and we segue right into another rehearsal scene a week later. HERMIA is off to the side conferring with MS. QUINCE. FRANCES is off to the side singing and dancing to her own music.

SUSIE is working on fight scenes as she tries to get TOM and BILL to pay attention to her. HELENA is going over lines with ROBIN. Flats and platforms may be used to indicate that a set is being built.

SUSIE: One - two - through and through - the blade goes snicker-snack! (*TOM and BILL try to cross swords [very makeshift swords incidentally]; they miss and both spin around.*) You're hopeless, you two! The play goes up in less than a week! Again! (*a la A CHORUS LINE.*) Again: a five-six-seven-EIGHT!

ROBIN: "Well have you heard but something hard of hearing - they call me Juliet..." WHAT'S the line?

MS. QUINCE: How are we doing here?

ROBIN: Fine. Fine. This just seems to be a mish-mash of lines from other Shakespearean plays. They're hard to learn.

MS. QUINCE: Nonsense. This is an excellent play. It's obviously an early rendering of Shakespeare but certainly a glimpse of the genius to come. What are you doing for movement?

HELENA: Nothing! She just stands there! I would move.

MS. QUINCE: Nothing will come of nothing. Do something.

ROBIN: I'm supposed to go over and pick up Toto and have her do a trick. It's all random if you ask me.

HELENA: But you're not even doing that!

ROBIN: Well, she's gotten heavier. And every time I go near her, she growls!

MS. QUINCE: Well, find some blocking for that part. You need to move.

ROBIN: I am your lead actress! I am doing everything I can!

FRANCES: What? What's that? I thought I was your lead actress?

And both ROBIN and FRANCES stomp away. TOM and BILL come by with swords clashing and SUSIE barking out orders.

SUSIE: Once more into the brig! With feeling, TOM! SAY IT WITH FEELING!

TOM: SUSIE! I can't remember my lines, my movements and feel something all at the same time!

ROMEO AND BEATRICE AND TOTO, TOO

BILL: Hey, Ms. Quince! What do you think? Pretty good stage combat, if you ask me! When do we get the surreal swords!

As TOM touches him with a sword.

BILL: A touch! A touch! I do confess it!

SUSIE: DON'T LET HIM TOUCH YOU WITH THE SWORD! If the sword was real you would be seriously wounded!

HERMIA: They're doing well, don't you think, Ms. Quince?

MS. QUINCE: Uneasy is the head that wears the director's crown. When do we open? At the end of the week?

HERMIA: We'll be ready. And it's not supposed to rain, so the theatre will be dry and the set will be amazing.

MS. QUINCE: I can hardly wait.

HERMIA: Me, too.

BLACKOUT. In the dark, we hear crashes of thunder and then rain. All quiets down and a news announcement is heard.

NEWS ANNOUNCER: The three day superstorm that passed through has left the town in shock. Power is just being restored. Some roads remain impassable due to fallen trees. On the lighter side, _____ [*Insert the name of your school or theatre*] is opening a new play tonight – and folks – you are not going to believe this – but there is some buzz that this play could change the course of history. I don't know how but come join the fun and see the world premiere of *ROMEO AND BEATRICE AND TOTO, TOO*.

Meanwhile the lights come up to a stage in ruins. Mops and buckets all over and there is the remnants of a set. Most of the clean-up has been done but a few soaked curtains or a soaked flat can still be in view. The entire cast except for FRANCES slowly walks onstage.

BILL: I don't suppose any part of the set can be revived?

MS. QUINCE: The set's gone. The flats were soaked through. Hermia and I just finished putting the last of it into the dumpster.

SUSIE: Well at least we have costumes! (*HERMIA shakes her head.*) We don't have costumes?

HERMIA: I rented them from a theatre in the next town. The road is still impassable because of some downed trees. No costumes. (*FRANCES enters on crutches.*) Hello! What happened to you?

FRANCES: You see before you a broken woman. Literally. My music is gone! My foot is broken and my heart, too.

HELENA: How did this happen?

FRANCES: When the storm started three days ago, I thought it would be a good idea to get into character.

TOM: Whhaaaat?

FRANCES: After all, Beatrice enters after a storm. I went outside to feel my dramatic action. It was wonderful! I was singing the music I composed and feeling the wind through my scalp and while finding my inner gesture, a gust of wind swept all my music away. Of course, I ran after it. Then, I tripped over a fallen branch and became one and same with the branch. I'm so sorry.

MS. QUINCE: Can you go on?

FRANCES: I'm supposed to stay off my foot for ten days. I don't see how I can do all the running around that Beatrice does.

HELENA: You can't go on?

MS. QUINCE: Are you sure you can't go on?

HELENA: She's sure.

SUSIE: It's no use. Everything is in shambles. Even Toto has been unnerved and she won't leave her basket.

ROBIN: Toto can't go on? Things are looking up.

MS. QUINCE: I don't see how we can go on. No sets, no costumes, one actress downed and no music. Our great discovery would be laughed off the stage. This is not a proper beginning for a new Shakespearean play.

TOM: But we do have a play and what did Shakespeare say? "The play's the thing?" We can pull this off if we have faith in the play?

ROBIN: I could pull costumes from the school's stash. They won't be historically accurate but at least the actors will be wearing something!

HERMIA: And we have canvass for the sails of the ship!

HELENA: And I can play Beatrice.

ROMEO AND BEATRICE AND TOTO, TOO

SUSIE: But we can't do the fight choreography. We haven't practiced in days!

TOM: So, we'll cut the sword fights!

SUSIE: This is awful! Toto won't do tricks and now my stunts are being cut.

FRANCES: Come on Susie. You can help me. We can stay in the background and sing some music!

BILL: Okay – let's get this show on the street!

MS. QUINCE: Okay Helena – you will do Beatrice. Make a cheat sheet ready so you have the lines handy. Susie – can you do the Nurse?

SUSIE: No! I don't want all those lines!

MS. QUINCE: Tom?

TOM: NO!

FRANCES: If I can enter and exit slowly, I can do it, Ms. Quince.

MS. QUINCE: Thank-you. Everyone - get ready! The show goes up in one hour!

EVERYONE but MS. QUINCE and HERMIA frantically scatter.

HERMIA: Ms. Quince, did we ever get programs? I've never seen them.

MS. QUINCE: Don't worry, Hermia. All is in place.

HERMIA: And it has the author's name in black and white? Is the script authenticated? Is William Shakespeare clearly down as the author?

MS. QUINCE: Don't worry your little head, Hermia. The author's name is in place. Now gather canvas, costumes and props and get ready for a show!

BLACKOUT.

HERMIA'S VOICE: *(In blackout.)* Places! PLACES everyone! It's showtime! And someone get TOTO and her basket off the set!

Lights come up and HERMIA is onstage introducing the show. There is a canvas stretched across the background. The cast should be

costumed in an incongruous manner, with pieces from **A CHRISTMAS CAROL** or a fairy tale or a Halloween costume. You may change the lines according to the costume.

HERMIA: (*SHE makes a grand sweeping entrance to indicate the show is starting.*) O for a muse of fire that would ascend the brightest heaven of invention! A city for a stage, sailors to act! Can this cockpit hold the town of Venezia? Where - to be or not to be - In two houses devoid of dignity Clans of sailors break to new mutiny

Whose misadventures we will now show
As the perilous ocean parts below.
Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;
But wonder on till truth makes all things plain.

BILL as "Romeo" comes dashing on and poses.

This man, in love with love, is Romeo, if you would know.
Who will soon find his fortunes drastically changed.

BILL/ROMEO: (*BILL stays posed until he gets impatient for a cue.*) I see a music cue! MUSIC CUE!

FRANCES: (*From behind the canvas, FRANCES jumps to life. She may conduct the others, clearly seen, or sing alone to the tune of "London Bridges."*) "The Port of Venice is sinking down, sinking down, sinking down. The Port of Venice is sinking down - into the ocean." (*They continue to hum under BILL/ROMEO'S speech.*)

BILL/ROMEO: If music be the food of love, play on! Give me excess of it, that sur-feiting - whatever - the appetite may sicken and so die. Enough! That strain again. It had a dying fall. Enough I said! No more! ENOUGH! (*BILL makes cutting gestures until the music mercifully ends.*) 'Tis not as sweet as it was before. Ay me. Romeo, Romeo wherefore am I stuck being Romeo? Romeo roams – searching for his heart. (*BILL should act out all the words: "roaming" and "searching".*)

It hath been sold to the highest bidder which was Lord Capulet.
Our families will untie and our inheritances to stay inert - uh-hh - intact.

(ROBIN/JULIET enters.) But soft! By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes. Juliet!

ROBIN/JULIET: Romeo!

BILL/ROMEO: Does she speak to me? Dare I answer? Yes, I dare. Maybe I can rid myself of her until tomorrow. A pansy for your thoughts dear Julie, for that's your name I hear.

ROBIN/JULIET: Well, have you heard but something hard of hearing? They call me "Juliet" that do speak of me.

BILL/ROMEO: You lie in faith - for you are called plain Julie - *(She smacks him.)* And bonnie Julie - *(She stops.)* - and sometimes Julie the curst! *(She kicks him. He grabs her from behind and finishes his lines as ROBIN/JULIET struggles desperately to be free.)* But take this - hearing thy "mildness" praised in every home and they "beauty" - - sounded - - myself am NOT moved to woo thee for a wife!

ROBIN/JULIET: *(Breaking free and landing him on the ground.)*

Moved? In good time let him that moved you hither, remove you hence.

BILL/ROMEO: *(From the ground, grabbing her leg and pulling her down.)* Alas, good Julie, I will not burden thee. For knowing thee to be young and light -

ROBIN/JULIET: *(And she lands on top of him.)* Too light for such a swain as you to catch - *(And she jumps on his legs.)* And yet as heavy as my weight should be!

BILL/ROMEO: *(Getting up, currently on all fours.)* Nay, come Juliet! You must not look so sour. *(Looks up at her.)*

ROBIN/JULIET: It is my fashion when I see a crab. *(She starts off and ROMEO hangs on to her leg. (Tries to exit dragging ROMEO the entire time.)*

BILL/ROMEO: Why does the world report that Julietta doth limp? O let me see thee walk! Thou dost not halt!

ROBIN/JULIET: *(Trying to peel his arms from her leg.)* Go, fool and whom thou keep'st command!

BILL/ROMEO: Thou must be married to any man but me!

ROBIN/JULIET: O Romeo! I do declare that by the time our families have announced our betrothal, I will have married any many but thee!

BILL/ROMEO: And for my part, dearest Juliet. I will myself find a wife who in turn will be anyone but thee!

JULIET limps off. Thunder is heard. It could be very makeshift from behind the curtain.

What's that? A storm? Rain? It seems of late in Venezia, the rain it raineth every day.

ROMEO exits and a small toy ship is seen bouncing along the top of the canvas. Yells are heard and cast members led by FRANCES sing a verse of "Blow the Man Down." TOM, FRANCES and SUSIE appear as waterlogged as possible.

TOM/SEBASTIAN: Blow winds and crack your cheeks! Rage! Blow!

SUSIE/SAILOR: Arrrgh!

TOM/SEBASTIAN: Land ho!

FRANCES/SAILOR: Ahoy!

Thank you for reading this free excerpt from ROMEO AND BEATRICE AND TOTO, TOO by Claudia Haas. For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script, please contact us at:

Heuer Publishing LLC

P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406

Toll Free: 1-800-950-7529 • Fax (319) 368-8011

HITPLAYS.COM