

THRUSTING GREATNESS

K.C. BRAGG

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Office
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kcbagg1@hotmail.com
304.421.5252

INT. THEATRE - DAY

The auditorium of Weebler College in the small town of Charlesville, West Virginia.

In the house sits MORRIS WEST disguised as WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE. He wears an Elizabethan costume. His goatee and his dark hair are neatly coiffed.

There are LIGHTS and a video field camera on a tripod. This event is operated by a small production crew: A CAMERA OPERATOR, SOUND OPERATOR carrying a boom pole, and an attractive female producer, LINDA who carries a clipboard.

A creative commercial director, SEAN, wears a ball cap and small headphones; he sits close to camera.

Morris is doing a "take".

WEST

Hello I'm William Shakespeare ...
and I'd like to personally invite
you to Weebler College's new season
of *exciting* theatre.

Director Sean sits up in his seat.

SEAN

Alright, cut - that was
fine. Let's move on.

WEST

I can do better.

SEAN

That was fine, Professor West -

WEST

Please call me by my character
name.

SEAN

Excuse me?

WEST

I insist. I like to stay in
character between takes.

Sean stands, takes off his cap and scratches his head.

SEAN

Okay, uh ... Mr. Shakespeare -

(CONTINUED)

WEST
Call me Willie.

LINDA
Come on Sean. Help the guy out.

SEAN
Why don't you help me out Linda?
You're my line producer, not his
agent.

WEST
Linda, what a lovely name. Would
you like to have a drink with me
afterward?

Linda smiles and looks down at her clipboard.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

The sound op shuffles as he continues to hold the boom pole. The camera operator looks at Sean, waiting for direction. Sean puts his cap back on.

SEAN
Okay, we're moving on.

WEST
One more take - I insist.

SEAN
(irritated)
Alright - one more.

He sits, and clears his throat.

SEAN
Here we go. You rolling?

CAMERA OP
Yep.

SEAN
Same line. In three, two -

West calmly raises his hand.

WEST
Can I have some powder please?

SEAN

Linda?

She stands, reveals a powder puff and moves to West.

WEST

Wonderful. Thank you.

She applies the powder and they flirt silently. The DOOR opens and in walks JOHN CHIFFON, nerdy professor of theatre. He is in his fifties, dressed conservatively, and carries a script. He is the epitome of an academic scholar.

CHIFFON

You guys start without me?

WEST

It's all under control John. I had to rewrite your script - this is TV so it must be the most exciting thirty seconds we can muster.

CHIFFON

You did what- why are dressed like that?

WEST

I'm the talent of course. You didn't expect to be on camera did you?

Chiffon deflates in front of everyone. Linda takes her place again. Sean looks at Chiffon.

SEAN

(impatient)

Can we do this - ?

Chiffon looks at his script, CRUMPLES it into a ball and throws it down in frustration.

CUT TO:

INT BAR - EVENING

The jukebox plays dance/pop MUSIC. West, still dressed as Shakespeare is dancing on the floor with Linda. They both have drinks in their hands. They are smiling, flirting and having a good time.

ANGLE ON BAR

West continues to drink with Linda. They sit at the bar. The LIGHTS are fairly low. The bar itself is average in its looks.

It's a fairly empty space except for a MAN wearing a football jersey, drinking a pitcher.

LINDA

How long have you been involved with theatre?

WEST

Practically all my life. I've treaded the boards probably as soon as I learned how to crawl.

LINDA

You always on like this?

WEST

What?

LINDA

Always this into the work?

WEST

Yes, I possess an intense connection with the material. Why, I remember recently doing a production of Julius Caesar -

FLASHBACK - INT. THEATRE

A silhouetted CROWD watches as modern-dress conspirators, CASSIUS, TREBONIUS, FLAVIUS and West as BRUTUS. The four of them are onstage during a key scene in Shakespeare's play.

WEST

They are all welcome. What watchful cares do interpose themselves betwixt your eyes and night?

CASSIUS

Shall I entreat a word?

Someone's cell PHONE rings from the house . The actors, including West, look around a bit startled.

(CONTINUED)

WEST
What if it's Caesar calling?

INT. BAR - PRESENT

West and Linda chuckle at his story. Linda almost falls off her chair. West reaches out and prevents her from toppling over. She drunkenly adjusts herself.

LINDA
Oh my. I should be getting home.
Having too much of a...

WEST
Good time.

LINDA
Yeah.

He reaches out and touches her hand.

WEST
Why don't we have a drink at my
place?

She gives him a look. He looks back at her.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM / ON CAT - NIGHT

An orange cat, this is ROMEO, is perched on a stereo speaker and watches the two lovers in action. He's indifferent to his surroundings.

The BED is heard rocking repeatedly.

HIGH ANGLE ON BED

They lay together in post-coital bliss, covered in sheets. He cradles her tenderly. They stare at the ceiling.

WEST
... and from there I got my Masters
and I was teaching, which I soon
discovered was my true calling. And
for better and for worse, Weebler
is my artistic base of operations.

(CONTINUED)

LINDA

Were you saying something about Hamlet, when I was writhing on top of you?

WEST

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind - to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Or to take arms against a sea of troubles ...

LINDA

You've played it haven't you-?

WEST

...and by opposing, fuck them.

She CHUCKLES at his joke. He cracks a huge smile.

WEST

I am directing the greatest play ever written. Again.

CLOSER

West softly kisses her forehead, as she MOANS with satisfaction; he rests his hand on her shoulder. Her arm lays across his chest.

LINDA

I don't even know your first name- Professor West.

WEST

Morris F.

LINDA

What's the middle initial?

WEST

It's Farouche. My mother was French.

LINDA

Really-

WEST

Yes it means "wild".

LINDA

Oh. Of course. It fits you perfectly.

West smiles as she runs her hand through his chest hair. They embrace again.

MOVING INT. KITCHEN - LATER

The SHADOWS of West and Linda are seen on the wall.

They appear as he opens the refrigerator as the LIGHT hits them. West has his arm around her, holding her close.

WEST
Ravenous.

LINDA
Faroosh. I like that.

WEST
Farouche- I prefer the French pronunciation.

LINDA
May I have another drink, Farouche?

WEST
But of course. Mi casa su casa.

ANGLE ON BED

They both stare at the ceiling. Their empty glasses sit on the night stand.

Linda touches his shoulder. She's unsure of where he is. Alas, he is somewhere else.

WEST
Would you be so kind as to strike my head with a blunt object-?

LINDA
What?

DIFFERENT ANGLE

West turns to her, takes her hand and looks her deeply into her eyes.

WEST
Well, not just any blunt object, it's actually one of my many Shakespeare busts -

(CONTINUED)

LINDA

Is this some kind of kinky thing-?
I'm not really into pain.

WEST

Neither am I - it's just that I
need you to hit me hard about my
head. Actually, once is good.

He points to the frontal lobe area of his head.

LINDA

Why in the hell would you want -

WEST

It's becoming a tradition of mine
before I direct a show -

LINDA

That's a pretty bizarre tradition -
you could end up in the hospital.

West sits up in bed, and she props herself up on one elbow.

WEST

Trust me. I know what I'm doing.

LINDA

I don't know -

WEST

A director must have a vision for
the show he directs - and mine must
be induced, but it yields great
results-

LINDA

My God, you've done this before?

WEST

Just a few years ago, I was
prepping to direct a production of
Othello, and I was struggling -

FLASHBACK - INT. STUDY (DAY)

A large shelf sits above a desk in West's private
office. The shelf has several books, and a bust of
Shakespeare is perched at one end of the shelf.

West sits directly below the shelf, with manuscript in hand,
and looks as if he is intensely studying the text. He's got
a drink in his other hand.

CLOSER ON SHELF

The end of the shelf closest to West suddenly collapses and books, as well the Shakespeare bust, on opposite end, slide down off the shelf.

ANGLE ON WEST

The bust hits West on top of the head and he drops everything and falls to the floor.

Laying on his side, he manages to move onto his back and looks up at the ceiling. His eyes see something brilliant.

A GLOW surrounds his face. Choral MUSIC echoes in his head.

WEST (VO)

I had the most brilliant vision of
the O.J. Simpson trial and that
little blond man, O.J.'s friend ...
what's his name?

INT. BEDROOM - PRESENT

West is standing as he's passionately recounted this event, with Linda sitting up in bed and watching him.

He wears his bed sheet much like a toga.

LINDA

Kato Kaelin?

WEST

Correct, and I envisioned them as
Othello and Iago, in the Brentwood
estate, discussing Othello's
horrific murder of his wife -

CUT TO:

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

Onstage are OTHELLO, wearing a dark jacket and West as IAGO, wearing a blond mullet. They are supposed to resemble O.J. and Kato, with DESDEMONA, resembling O.J.'s ex-wife Nicole, lying in bed. She's been murdered by O.J./Othello; he wears gloves and toboggan.

Othello stands over her limp body, close to the bed. MUSIC hits.

(CONTINUED)

OTHELLO

(singing)

She turned to folly and she was a
whore!

WEST

(singing)

Villainous whore!

Desdemona suddenly springs up out of bed, and simultaneously
SLAPS Othello and West hard about the face.

INT. BEDROOM - PRESENT DAY

Linda is standing closer to West - she's wearing jeans and
t-shirt.

LINDA

I don't care - I can't do this
-it's completely insane.

WEST

I'll pay you.

LINDA

I don't want your money -

She starts to leave the room and he follows after her.

WEST

How would you like season tickets -

LINDA

No - I think I'd like to go home
now. This evening just got
extremely weird.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

She goes to the couch - sits and starts to put her sandals
on. West follows in.

WEST

I realize this is difficult for you
to understand, but all artists have
their methods -

LINDA

Uh-huh.

(CONTINUED)

WEST

The semester is only a couple of weeks away from starting and subsequently my auditions - I'm in a bit of a rut.

LINDA

Why can't you get inspiration some other way - why violence.

WEST

It's not real violence - it's simply a quick jolt in the old noggin. I've tried several other methods - booze, drugs, seances, the black arts, bondage, you name it-

She begins to reconsider her initial response.

LINDA

This is nuts.

WEST

Please help me.

LINDA

This is definitely unlike any encounter I've ever had -

He grabs her hand and puts it to his head.

WEST

My head is solid. You won't hurt me I promise.

She feels through his big hair and touches his large solid head.

LINDA

Your head feels weird - kind of lumpy.

WEST

I know we've only known each other for just a few hours, but I want you to know I trust you completely. And that was some of the best sex I've ever had. And that's not the alcohol talking either.

She looks at him. He looks at her and raises his eyebrows in a pleading manner.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO:

INT. STUDY - MOMENTS LATER

West's private office in his home. It's got a nocturnal vibe. Romeo is perched nearby on the window ledge.

West has dressed in casual wear, and is sitting in an office chair. Linda is standing behind him; she holds the Shakespeare bust in both hands. She's a bit tipsy. West is very buzzed as well.

WEST

Carefully, raise your arms and when you strike, try to aim somewhere in this region -

He circles a target with his hand to indicate the very top of his head.

LINDA

Oh, God why did I let you talk me into this?

West smiles broadly. Linda feels the weight of the bust in her hands. She's nervous as hell.

LINDA

I just went to bed with you and now I'm going to bludgeon you. Can I have another drink please?

West turns to look at her.

WEST

Are you ready to take this journey toward greatness?

LINDA

No.

WEST

Raise your arms.

She raises the bust in her arms.

WEST

Now repeat after me - I ...

LINDA

I ...

(CONTINUED)

WEST
Have just been duped ...

LINDA
Have just been - what?

WEST
... by the greatest actor that ever
lived.

LINDA
Oh my god I'm such an idiot.

West CHUCKLES.

WEST
Gotcha!

LINDA
Oh shit.

WEST
I made that story up out of thin
air. You actually believed that I
would let you -

She lowers the bust and holds it.

LINDA
You son of a - I can't believe...

WEST
You would hit me with that massive
object.

She LAUGHS nervously and with relief.

LINDA
You bastard! ... and I was going to
do it. Holy shit. Why would you do
that?

A gigantic LIGHTNING BOLT flashes just outside the window
where Romeo sits.

WEST
Just wanted to mess with you. And I
met unequivocal success. In the
great theatrical tradition of joke
pulling, I have found yet another
beautiful victim -

The FLASH appears again. In reaction, Romeo SHRIEKS a piercing howl and runs across Linda's feet. Startled, she throws the bust in the air. It falls directly onto West's head. He topples out of the chair and onto the floor. Linda SCREAMS.

ANGLE ON WEST

He's on his side, out of it completely and wears a hint of a smile. The bust appears next to him, on its side.

LINDA (OS)
Shit! Shit! Shit!

WIDER

Linda kneels down next to West and tries to revive him by slapping him in the face. She grabs him by the shoulders and shakes him.

LINDA
Wake up! Damn it wake the hell up!

He doesn't respond.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

A sword-wielding man, this is DALE HARVEY, dressed in dark clothes, including a shiny leather jacket, FIGHTS a trio of THUGS. Dale is long-haired with pony-tail, and slightly overweight.

His opponents are a HALF-ORC, half-human who carries a club, a NINJA, with numb chucks, and a BIKER with a chain.

There are garbage cans, a dumpster and other assorted trash that fills the alley way. The scene has a fantastical, almost comic book quality about it.

Currently the biker has a chain around Dale's neck, but he kicks both the ninja and half-orc away and punches the biker with his elbow.

DALE
You picked the wrong man to fight,
you bacon-fed knaves! Have at thee!

(CONTINUED)

The half-orc comes at him, and Dale guts him with his sword; the creature WAILS and falls over dead. The ninja swings at Dale, who ducks and kicks him. The ninja runs away and disappears.

The biker panics, which Dale picks up on. He holds his sword high in the air and goes after him.

DALE

Fight me thou execrable wretch! O,
Smiling damned villain!

The biker starts to go, but Dale pulls out his hidden dagger and throws it skillfully in the direction of the thug.

ANGLE ON DAGGER - MOVING

It flies through the air and HITS its target, right in the biker's ass. He SCREAMS and falls to the ground.

MOVING

Dale turns but the ninja is gone.

DALE

Ah, shadowy one. Where hast thou
gone?

He sheaths his sword, walks over to the biker, who is writhing in pain.

He pulls the dagger out of the biker, who SCREAMS again. Dale sheathes the dagger, picks up the biker and holds his face.

DALE

You remind me of my uncle. I
despised him so. For what he did
to my father.

Dale SNAPS the biker's neck, and drops him to the ground.

DALE

Oh death. Bitter and sweet. Waiting
'round the next corner. What's a
melancholy prince to do? I must
face thee -

He draws his sword dramatically.

DALE
FOR THE LAST TIME, SHADOW WARRIOR -
I WILL SMOTE THEE!!!!

CUT TO:

ON DOORWAY

The door opens and Dale's mom, MYRTLE, wearing glasses, a turbie twist and bathrobe, stands in the doorway of Dale's room.

MYRTLE
Dale, your voice really needs to
come down. And it's smells like
marijuana down there.

She SPRAYS some air refresher out of a long can.

INT. BASEMENT

Dale is standing in his room, with his plastic sword in hand, dressed in jeans, funky t-shirt and tennis shoes. He stands ready to fight. He turns toward the door.

DALE
MOM NO GODDAMN AEROSOL! Crap, you
made me break character.

ON DUDES AT TABLE

3 young MEN, in their twenties, WALLY, GEORGE and SAM, are sitting at a small table with their game pieces and board. The dice have been rolled but the role playing has ceased.

WALLY
It's ok man. We're probably at a
good stopping point.

The miniature figurines are displayed. A map of their campaign is on the game table as well.

CUTAWAY TO BOOKCASE

A large human skull GLOWS - it has some incense sticks poking out of it and is producing incense SMOKE.

MEDIUM OF DALE

He smells his incense, waves a dramatic gesture and senses something out of joint.

DALE
Feeling bad karma from yelling at
mother. Must dispel.

He spins himself around with his sword, SPITS into the metal plate seated close and FARTS three times quickly. His face reveals deep concentration.

GEORGE(OS)
So tell me again why he's doing
this?

Dave runs out of the lower door.

OUTSIDE DOOR - DALE

Dale CHANTS in some indistinguishable language.

He KICKS the door back open.

MEDIUM OF BASEMENT AREA - SAME

The DOOR flies open. Dale is in the doorway, posing.

The trio watches him with an odd detached curiosity.

WALLY
In case bad spirits have attempted
to take him over - more weird gypsy
actor stuff.

Dale rolls into the room.

DALE
Thy fardels are bearing grunts.

SAM
Was he an actor?

DALE
Not was, *am*. I am an actor. I
studied.

SAM
Where?

CUT TO:

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

West sits inside the Weebler college theatre auditorium.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, looking like a classical zombie, sits somewhere behind West. A dreamy like blackness surrounds his eyes - he's got his quill in his hand.

SHAKESPEARE

Damned as a dead-eyed dog.

Suddenly Will JAMS the quill into his right eye socket. Black ooze streams out of his eye.

SHAKESPEARE

Out damned spot.

West turns in his seat to look behind him and examines Will with a long drawn out strangeness.

There are no other visible in the house. West sits very close to the lip of the stage.

The LIGHTS are low, indicating the play is about to start. He looks around the house, sees no one else and hears a CHORD of music play.

The LIGHTS come up on stage, illuminating West's face. He looks intently toward the stage.

ON LIT STAGE

A stage actor, this is Dale about five years younger, a tad slimmer, long hair with a ponytail, enters the scene. He is inside a typical looking black box performance space. The actor is dressed in all black and carries a small blade.

There is an undercurrent of incidental MUSIC softly playing underneath. He stumbles for a moment, recovers and makes his way downstage. He is very drunk.

ON WEST - CONTINUOUS

A jolt of recognition appears on his face. This is not a pleasant memory.

WEST

No.

ON THE STAGE

Dale looks around, fully taking in this important moment. His eyes are BLOODSHOT. He opens his mouth to speak.

DALE

To be, or not to be ...

He suddenly stops and steps downstage, drops his blade and VOMITS.

ON WEST

Vomit flies down onto West's head. He shuts his eyes and raises his arms in futile retaliation.

ANGLE ON SHAKESPEARE

Now almost a skeleton, Shakespeare LAUGHS maniacally. There is a ghost ECHO of audience LAUGHTER.

ON STAGE

Dale/Hamlet covers his mouth. Some spittle hits the stage.

DALE

Sorry.

He runs offstage and CRASHES into a set piece. There is a THUD of his body hitting the floor.

DALE(OS)

Ow. To be shit or not to be shit -
to be shat upon.

ON WEST

His arms raised, wearing vomit, he stands furiously. He slips on the floor and falls.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

West is sprawled on his couch, with a wet towel on his forehead. He sits up suddenly, and feels the pain of the impact.

(CONTINUED)

WEST

Merde.

He sits back on the couch, holding the towel. Linda appears suddenly, holding her cell phone.

LINDA

I'm calling 911 -

WEST

No need, I will be fine - I assure you. How did I get here?

She shuts her flip phone and puts it in her jean pocket.

LINDA

I dragged you here from your office.

WEST

I'm afraid I don't know what the devil is happening -

LINDA

Well, um. You asked me to knock you out, then said it was a joke - and then your cat shrieked and I lost control and you were hit in the head. With your bust.

West gets up and moves to Linda, tosses the towel and takes her hand.

WEST

Oh? Well. That's a lot to take in right now. Why don't we say good night- it was something wasn't it ... ?

He is searching for her name but cannot remember.

LINDA

It wasn't my fault - your cat scared the shit out of me.

WEST

Oh. Romeo? Yes of course. He does that from time to time. He's a bit psychotic - being an indoor cat. Longer life, more psychological issues.

(CONTINUED)

West puts his hand to his head, sitting back down on the couch. His head is throbbing with pain. She sits next to him.

LINDA

Tell me you're alright. Say something - please.

West pauses, and leans in to her.

WEST

I've lately been convinced of something in my relationship to William Shakespeare and any theatrical endeavor that I pursue.

LINDA

What's that?

WEST

(earnestly)

I believe I'm cursed.

Linda gives him a look as if West is joking. Alas, he is not. But seeing that she thinks so, he acts like he is.

WEST

Yes. Hilarious, isn't it.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Dale's friends are gone.

He is seated alone on the floor and looking through an old photo album. Pictures of him as a stage actor at Weebler. There's a shot of Professor West and Dale, standing together.

Upstairs, he hears the DOOR opening.

MYRTLE (OS)

Are you doing the black magic again?

DALE

(defensive)

No. It's called Mazes of Evil. It's not an evil game. Even though it has evil in the title.

(CONTINUED)

He blows some CANDLES out and starts to move about the room, putting all of his game items away.

MYRTLE (OS)
I smell pot!

DALE
Jesus. It's incense, mom.

MYRTLE (OS)
I need you to drive me to the store.

He throws a box of gaming pieces behind a curtain, and grabs his coat.

DALE
I don't drive, Mom - you know that.

Her FOOTSTEPS move down the stairs - Myrtle's voice is closer.

MYRTLE (OS)
Where are you going?

He suddenly pulls the curtain back to reveal a large and luminous SHRINE on his wall to Hamlet, complete with pictures, costume pieces, weaponry and skulls. Some of the images are of Gielgud, Branagh, Olivier and Burton. One picture frame sits alone on a small table and it's picture has been removed. Dale reaches out and touches the empty frame.

DALE
(elevated voice)
I must away Mother - to England.

MYRTLE (OS)
(unsure of reference)
What-?

Dale turns away from the shrine and heads toward the lower door.

DALE
Don't worry I'll send you a postcard.

He looks out of the basement window. RAIN is falling from the sky.

DALE

Alas, dear mother, parting is so
sweet. Not bitter. Just sweet.

ON MYRTLE

She stands at the very top of the stairs. She looks
worried.

MYRTLE

Did you get a job- or do you have a
new girlfriend? Just talk to me,
Dale.

The downstairs DOOR opens and shuts.

MYRTLE

Good night - sweet prince.

She shrugs, letting him go but her face shows worry.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Dale picks up a hula-hoop from the side of the house, opens
an umbrella and positions himself near the rain-soaked
street. A street LIGHT illuminates the area.

He steps inside the hoop and begins to make it swirl around
him. Dale is alone in the rainy night. Doing the
hula-hoop, with an umbrella covering him.

A CAR drives by and HONKS. Dale keeps hooping.

CUT TO:

DALE AS HAMLET ONSTAGE - FLASHBACK

His Hamlet from the past vomiting prodigiously.

West is sitting in the audience and is hit by some of the
vomit. He wipes away some of the puke with an older WOMAN'S
scarf, who sits close by. She is wearing of look of terror
on her face.

There is a small AUDIENCE watching and reacting as West
stands and runs toward the stage.

BACKSTAGE AREA - MOMENTS LATER

West SLAMS the intoxicated Dale up against the closed stage door and holds him there.

WEST

I gave you the greatest role ever
and you tossed your cookies on the
audience - on William Fucking
Shakespeare!

Dale drunkenly swings at West, barely connecting. It's enough for West to let him go. Dale staggers.

DALE

I don't give a shit, you betrayed
me - you fornicated my woman and
I'm going to smote you for this!
VILLAIN!

They wrestle and move toward the wall with several ropes that control the fly system on the stage.

WEST

Your girlfriend seduced me!

DALE

Ex -

WEST

Right. of course.

DALE

Bullshit!

They grab each other and flail about the area. Dale manages to move West against the wall and onto a lever. The LEVER is released.

ANGLE ON BATON

High above the stage, a long thick pole used for hanging drops is currently carrying some brick-shaped weights. The baton is released and begins to fall toward the stage.

ON BACKSTAGE AREA - SAME

West shoves Dale away just as the baton/weight HITS West on the top of his head and shoulders, knocking him down.

2 Elizabethan costumed ACTORS, theatre students from the production, appear. West looks to be unconscious.

(CONTINUED)

ACTOR 1
Did you kill him Dale?

Dale moves to him and kneels down to check. West's eyes suddenly open, possessed by rage. He grabs Dale around the throat and the 2 actors have to break his hold. Dale moves off as West is lifted up to stand. West's head is BLOODY.

WEST
Get out of my school! You'll never
set foot on this stage ever again!
By Shakespeare's ghost, I SWEAR
THIS TO BE TRUE!

There is a THUNDEROUS hit as West poses with his hand held high in the air. Registering immense pain, his red face sours and he passes out again.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

Dale is standing in the rain, with the umbrella dropped. The hula hoop has dropped.

Dale stands like a zombie with the RAIN soaking him.

WEST (VO)
(heavy echo)
You'll never set foot on this stage
ever again!

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPUS WEEBLER COLLEGE

It's a bright day on campus. No students to be found. Classes start in just a couple of days. Okay, there's one bespectacled STUDENT, sitting on a park bench.

He's asleep with a book by Tolstoy in his lap, his head cocked sideways. A trail of spittle is running out of his open mouth.

JULIA (VO)
How did the TV shoot go?

WEST (VO)
Excellent well, once Chiffon was
disposed of.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

DR. JULIA STARK, a middle-aged professional woman, sits behind her large desk. Her desk plaque reads: Dean & Chairperson of Communications/Theatre Arts.

There are flags behind her: an American flag as well as a yellow/gold collegiate flag.

An Edward Hopper painting hangs on the wall. West sits across from her, with coffee mug. A human skull is seen on the mug.

JULIA

Ever since I've been in this department, you've managed to make things more complicated for yourself, and for those you work with.

WEST

I've never lost sight of my artistic integrity - and of my educational philosophy.

JULIA

I don't know, I'd almost be willing to say you lost it a while back-

WEST

What are you referring to - my artistic integrity or educational philosophy?

JULIA

Both.

WEST

Ouch.

She sits back in her chair.

JULIA

Can I ask you something personal?

WEST

Certainly Julia.

JULIA

What happened between you and Professor Chiffon?

West leans forward in his chair.

(CONTINUED)

WEST

Why is that important?

JULIA

He mentioned to me that at one time, you two used to be good friends. Now he is perplexed about the fact that all you two seem to do is fight.

WEST

I don't recall ever being friends with Chiffon.

JULIA

You've worked alongside each other for years.

West looks at her and there's no indication of him remembering. She looks at him, waiting for West to revise his statement, but nothing happens.

WEST

I think the poor man may be suffering from professional jealousy.

Julia looks at him like that's not likely.

INT. BOX OFFICE - DAY

SALLY MOORE, the receptionist for the theatre department, and in charge of the box office, is on the phone. She's middle-aged, attractive and one of those women who look great wearing short hair.

SALLY

Classes don't begin for another week - yes I would imagine the late enrollment period is still going on. Do you have our web address to check for available classes? Do you own a computer? Ok, how long have you been a college student? You're how old?

West strolls in to the box office, coffee mug in hand. He checks his mailbox, on a wall near Sally's desk.

SALLY

Oh, hi Mr. Cradle. You've been such a loyal patron of our theatre,
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SALLY (cont'd)
now you want to enroll in an acting
class? We've inspired you that
much.

This gets West's attention. He waves to Sally.

SALLY
Excuse me a sec - yes?

WEST
Please advise old man Cradle that
my acting class is closed for the
semester-

SALLY
Morris -

WEST
It's merely creative truth
distortion - please do it for the
sake of my sanity. I will not be
able to tolerate his ramblings.

Sally blankly stares at West, and then back on the phone
with Mr. Cradle.

SALLY
Yes absolutely, Professor West can
fit you into his class -

West puts his hands up, in frustration.

WEST
There is no love here. Open chest
- insert blade.

SALLY
Yes thank you. Good-bye.

Sally hangs up - and smiles at his suffering.

WEST
Thank you, Lady Schadenfreud -

SALLY
Before I forget - the fine arts
newsletter wants to interview you
about Nick Reinhold -

WEST
Nick who?

She writes on a sticky note and hands it to West.

SALLY

Your former student, now big time working actor in Hollywood.

WEST

Oh yes. He must be coming in for some grand appearance during the semester.

SALLY

They want your comments about him. As far as Bob Cradle, he's the sweetest man. I don't have a choice but to help him; after all, he and his wife are two of our longest living patrons-

WEST

Yes I know. Old as Methuselah. They just won't die. They keep coming back -

West puts his mail back into his slot. Chiffon enters with briefcase - and checks his mail.

CHIFFON

Sally - Morris.

SALLY

And they certainly don't like you - Hi John.

WEST

I refuse to cast them - and he did hit me with a tomato once. During my monologue -

SALLY

You have this odd habit of casting yourself - in shows you direct.

West is fixated on the view through the office window.

WEST

Have I mentioned what a beautiful day it is outside-?

CLOSER ON WINDOW

Looking through to the outside, a couple of curvaceous female STUDENTS walk through campus.

WEST (OS)

I should sit outside today and
write poetry.

NEW ANGLE OF OFFICE SPACE

Chiffon looks through a few pieces of mail and tosses them in the trash.

CHIFFON

I've had this same argument with
him - we don't have an official
policy against faculty casting
themselves. But I highly doubt
Morris would deny a student the
opportunity of playing Hamlet ...

West is silent. He continues his gaze of the ladies outside.

CHIFFON

Would you -?

WEST

Oh, look at the time - got to get
to my office. Meeting a student to
discuss...options.

He is off, with Chiffon looking after him.

CUT TO:

INT. WEST'S OFFICE - DAY

West is splayed on his blue leather casting couch. Next to him is SANDY SAWYER, an attractive, blond theatre/communications student. She is auditioning in this private setting for West.

There's a large bust of Shakespeare on a shelf and several pictures of West, his awards and honors, hanging on the walls. The office is a shrine to his own magnificence.

They both hold manuscripts. Her reading for the Shakespearean character of Ophelia sounds just like a cold reading, without much feeling.

(CONTINUED)

SANDY

Good my lord - how does your honor
for this many a day?

WEST

(clears throat)
Well, my lady. Well, well. Well.

SANDY

My lord, I have remembrances of
yours.

She tentatively reaches out and touches his shoulder. West stands and turns dramatically, dropping his manuscript on the couch.

WEST

I need a mint.

He slyly moves to his desk, grabs a breath mint and CRUNCHES it with his teeth. He leans on his desk. His pants are way too tight. Sandy watches him.

WEST

When I think of the ... character
of Ophelia in Hamlet, I think of
her nakedness. Her
succulence. Her sexual magnetism.

Sandy is intrigued, in her own curious way. She stands and moves toward him.

SANDY

I can play that. In other
productions, I think I've been,
what's the word?

He is fixated on her breasts. He ogles her until his eyes squint.

WEST

Well ... I don't want you to worry
about that.

SANDY

Typecast.

WEST

I don't want you to simply "play"
it either.

They move closer into each others personal bubble.

(CONTINUED)

WEST

I want you to become her. Think of the pain, the isolation Ophelia feels.

ON OFFICE DOOR

The door handle turns and is locked. There is a soft KNOCK.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

West impatiently reacts, then goes to door, unlocks it and opens slightly. JEFF, his twenty-something pony-tailed stage manager, pokes his head in.

JEFF

Professor West, you've got another audition scheduled for eleven fifteen-

He holds out a clipboard with a schedule on it.

WEST

Damn it man can't you see I'm working? Leave us and do not disturb us until I call for you.

JEFF

Oh of course - how's her "audition" going?

West shoves the young man out of the doorway, shuts and locks the door.

SANDY

You're so passionate Professor West.

His face shifts from anger into glowing excitement over her compliment.

WEST

Please, call me Morris. And when it comes to Shakespeare, my passion knows no bounds.

FAVORING "CASTING" COUCH

Sandy sits back down on the couch, manuscript in lap, generally more relaxed and in tune with West.

He sways over to her and sits close. The leather makes a SQUEAK under his thighs.

WEST
Excuse me.

Sandy CHUCKLES lightly.

WEST
Let's try this again, shall we?

He touches her leg. She looks down at his hand.

CLOSER ON THEM

She looks back up and his overt gesture registers with her.

SANDY
Oh.

He scoots in closer and the leather SQUEAKS again.

WEST
Lisa -

SANDY
It's Sandy -

WEST
Sandra. How badly do you want this role?

She turns to face him. Their faces are close together.

SANDY
(her voice deepens)
I want it bad.

She grabs him and kisses him hard. The manuscripts fall onto the floor. They embrace and eventually fall off of the couch and onto the floor.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

A JANITOR, wearing his green garb, pushes a bucket and mop.

West's office DOOR opens and Sandy runs out of it.

She tears down the long corridor as Chiffon turns the corner and is nearly run over by her. She is visibly upset.

CHIFFON

OH! Excuse me... Sandy?

He watches her continue her quick walk and then turns back to look ahead.

ON OFFICE DOOR - SAME

West's face is seen in the crack of the open door. His shirt is open. He sees Chiffon looking and quickly slams the DOOR shut.

ON CHIFFON

He is stopped in the hallway and looks disgusted at what he has witnessed.

CHIFFON

Scoundrel. Another casting couch casualty.

INT. OFFICE - FAVORING WEST

West moves to his desk, as he buttons his shirt. Seeing the bust of Shakespeare, he picks it up and holds it like a dear friend.

WEST

Will, why must I veer off the path from greatness? What is this monkey lust inside me? I'm afraid it's the curse. I must break it once and for all - what's that one ritual to do, I know it involves swearing and square dancing- not unlike breaking the curse of the Scottish tragedy.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATRE - DAY

William Shakespeare, looking healthier than previously seen, sits alone in the theatre of West's mind. He addresses the camera.

SHAKESPEARE

These flashbacks are amateurish and strange. I pray you, stop with this nonsense about the past and get on with your work. You ruinous butt, you whore son indistinguishable cur. Don't let any of these plebes get to you. Crush them like maggots. Now before you forget, turn around three times, do a dosado and shout "Piss pots!"

INT. OFFICE - PRESENT DAY

Jeff KNOCKS, enters again, with clipboard.

West is in the middle of finishing his dosado -

WEST

Piss - pots! Very well, bring her in. I am ready.

Jeff nods and smiles - he turns back into the hallway.

JEFF

Shelly Bowman - you're next.

Jeff disappears, leaving the door open.

SHELLY BOWMAN appears inside the doorway; she's a tall, slender college student. Wearing a silky dress, she has long beautiful brunette hair. She smiles confidently.

ON WEST - SAME

He poses akimbo, leading with his groin. He deliberately turns his head to the camera.

WEST

God, I love the theatre.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Dale stands alone in his driveway with his plastic saber drawn. He stands completely still. There's a street LIGHT illuminating his concrete playing space.

DALE

I am thy father's spirit, doomed
for a certain term to walk the
night.

THUNDER hits and LIGHTNING flashes in the sky.

DALE

I am your father! NOOOOOO!

Dale performs an imaginary light saber battle between Hamlet and his ghost father (much like Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader). After a quick round, he kneels down, back into Shakespearean mode.

DALE

(as the Ghost)

Oh Hamlet, what a falling off was
there... it was like a bottomless
pit with spikes all the way down.
With a vile and loathsome crust,
much like that six day old
hand-tossed pizza in my chamber...

He stands - building the momentum of the scene.

DALE

Thus was I, sleeping, by a
brother's hand, of life, of crown,
of queen, at once dispatched: Cut
off even in the blossoms of my sin.

CUTAWAY - STORM BREWING IN SKY

There are pockets of LIGHTNING within the storm clouds.

DALE (OS)

No reckoning made, but sent to my
account with all my imperfections
on my head: O, horrible! O,
horrible! most horrible!

ON DALE - CONTINUOUS

He switches roles to play the Dane of York.

DALE

Bummer Dad. What should I do? I
can't make up my mind about
anything.

He switches back to the Ghost King.

DALE

About your brain!

He reaches out and pantomimes the ghost father grabbing and transferring the "vision" to his son.

Suddenly LIGHTNING zaps Dale and he falls onto the driveway.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

The back of his clothes are charred from the lightning. The STORM continues.

Dale manages to sit up. His hair is spiked and part of his facial skin is black. His plastic sword is melted.

DALE

Uh ... line?

Throwing down the ruined toy, he touches his temple with his finger. It SIZZLES.

DALE

Rest gentle spirit ... and let this
distracted globe become ...
undistracted.

He falls over from the shock.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - EVENING

West stands onstage in front of a group of STUDENTS. He is looking through some audition forms. Some of the students are watching West carefully while others fill out an audition form.

Jeff, West's assistant/stage manager, is handing out forms to some of the seated students.

(CONTINUED)

West puts some of the forms down and picks up a hard bound black manuscript.

WEST

To be cast or not to be cast - that is the question I will answer after tonight's auditions for William Shakespeare's enormous work about human existence - the tragedy of Hamlet.

He holds the manuscript up in the air. There is a gentle APPLAUSE. West waves it away.

WEST

Great work such as this may only be given life every once in a very long while -

He walks toward a table and sets the book down.

WEST

With that being said, the play selection committee at Weebler College, after listening to my passionate plea, agreed to allow me to stage this behemoth work once again. But dear students of theatre, I had to promise it would be nothing short of brilliant. Ay, there's the rub.

Smiling, he walks across the stage, and surveys the crowd.

ON STUDENTS - SAME

There's one young male, CHRIS, who appears to be listening.

An African American male, ZAREB sits back wearing sunglasses. He slowly, and coolly, takes the glasses off.

Another STUDENT looks like he's already half asleep. A female STUDENT leans over and SLAPS the kid on the back of head, jarring him awake.

WEST (OS)

As I look out at your beautiful visages, I see the potential for greatness. Who will rise to this occasion? Is Hamlet out there, among you? Ophelia - Gertrude - Claudius? Where are the players?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WEST (OS) (cont'd)

There are indeed great lessons in this classical work - and the genius of Shakespeare is to be unearthed once again in our production.

ON WEST - MOVING

He makes his way down the house right steps and onto the house floor.

WEST

And for this special occasion, I have opened up auditions to include anyone in our community who would like to participate.

CUTAWAY TO MEDIUM OF SMALL GROUP

An elderly couple, this is BOB and VERA CRADLE, nod their heads in recognition. They are in their mid to late seventies, conservatively dressed and look comfortable in this performance space.

WEST (OS)

A very special welcome to you. No guarantees of getting cast of course.

Bob frowns and crosses his arms.

WEST - CLOSE

He is planted close to the group and CRACKS his neck. He plays with his small goatee as he talks to the crowd of students.

WEST

Before discussing the individual roles and audition scenes, I would like to demonstrate a very effective warm-up exercise for auditions. It loosens the vocal chords for maximum effect. You must open up and support your breath with your diaphragm; what you are about to hear is "the primal chord"... it warms up your instrument and invigorates the body. Alright here we go.

(CONTINUED)

West EXHALES.

He poses dramatically and utters the loudest continuous VOCAL PROJECTION. It has a resonance almost like opera.

WEST
YAAA -

He holds an intense look for several long moments - his face, his entire body is concentrated on this exercise.

ON STUDENTS - SAME

They are perplexed, amused, befuddled. This holds their attention.

Except for one male student who continues to sleep.

WEST (OS)
--AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

ON JEFF

West's assistant raises an eyebrow in reaction to this warm-up exercise. He taps the ear piece on his headset.

WEST (OS)
--- AAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH --

ON WEST - CONTINUOUS

West's arms are out as if he is finishing a song. He gestures to indicate the effectiveness of this exercise. His face is almost entirely red and puffy.

WEST
AAAAAAHHHHHH.

He wears a big satisfied smile.

WEST
The endorphins are kicked in and you feel as if you could tackle any role, any scene - alright, who's first?

WEST (cont'd)
address this question of human
existence. What does it mean to be
alive? At the end of the day, I
think what Shakespeare wrote came
the closest of all - and he honed
it down to ...

He silently counts the words in his head.

WEST
... Six simple words. Now it's your
turn to take the stage, and make
this famous speech your own. Grab
it by the metaphorical
Shakespearean balls and don't let
go.

MEDIUM OF ZAREB

He stands defiantly onstage, with script in hand. He wears
sunglasses. His bravado shines through.

ZAREB
To be, or not to motherfuckin' be -
that is the question.

MEDIUM OF CHRIS

He is very flamboyant with his gestures. He moves about the
stage with confidence.

CHRIS
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to
suffer the slings and arrows -

MEDIUM OF FELIX

His stoner persona becomes apparent as he talks.

FELIX
- of outrageous fortune, or to take
arms dude.

He gets lost- he looks down at his script.

FELIX
... against a sea of ... oh, dude
I'm so lost.

(CONTINUED)

WEST (OS)

Thank you.

MEDIUM OF CHARLES

His style reflects a more classical approach; a very presentational style of acting. His body is stiff but his voice is good.

CHARLES

And by opposing, end them. To die,
to sleep no more. And in that
sleep of death, what dreams may
come, when we have shuffled off
this mortal coil - must give us ...
pause.

ON WEST

He's sitting in the house, with some students scattered behind him.

CHARLES (OS)

... for who would bear the whips
and chains ...

West's hand rests upon his cheek. His eyes are hazy. He runs his hand through his hair. He's getting bored. Stifles a yawn.

CHARLES (OS)

...the proud man's contumely, the
despised love, the insolence of
office -

WEST (VO)

Not one of them ... I've narrowed
it down to these four but none of
them stand out to me. What in holy
Caesar's ghost is to be done-

DIFFERENT ANGLE - SAME

Shakespeare sits behind West and leans over to him.

SHAKESPEARE

Thou knowest what must be done.

WIDE OF PROSCENIUM AND STAGE

Charles continues to read in the same elevated manner.

CHARLES
... thus conscience does make
cowards of us all.

West makes his way down to the front of the house.

WEST
Thank you - all of you.

Charles makes a gesture to indicate success in his reading,
as he walks off stage.

WEST
Most of you know I began my career
as an actor. I have always so been
fascinated by the character of
Hamlet - so what would I do -

REVERSE ANGLE

A group of students - watch intently. There are some
puzzled looks on their faces. Mr. Cradle rolls his eyes in
disgust.

WEST (OS)
... you may ask, to ensure that
this production is a bodacious
triumph? Who would be the most
practical choice -

ON AISLE

Zareb stands with his sunglasses.

WEST (OS)
...to play the most crucial acting
role ever written?

ON WEST

He stands confidently in front of the group. He's not
worried about what he must do.

WEST
Directing is about choices. So
much of it is casting the right
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WEST (cont'd)
people. I must not falter in this phase - remember that I encourage you to accept any role that you are offered. We all have to begin with what is given to us. And truly there are no small parts ...

He's about to go there, but he doesn't.

WEST
- well in fact there are small parts and small actors as well. But let me send you off with words of inspiration...

MOVING

He suddenly moves to the stage - with an unknowing audience to perform for -

WEST
Remember Hamlet's words: Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue. But if you mouth it, as many of our players do, I had as lief the town crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, by use all gently, for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness ...

He looks out amongst the crowd. They offer no visible reaction.

WEST
Well then I'll say good night - thank you all for coming!

Bob Cradle gets up from his chair. His wife follows.

BOB
Damn it, you're going to deny more students another great opportunity - I've had enough of this crap. Come on Vera.

WIDER HOUSE

They walk toward the exit of the auditorium as the students watch.

WEST

Pay no attention to them, students.
They act like this every time I
direct a show -

BOB

This production is damned I tell
you- it's all because of him!

WEST

(full of venom)
Isn't it time you went home and
died in your sleep you old fart.

There's a small CHUCKLE from some of the students.

Bob and Vera Cradle turn on him.

BOB

Vera, bag!

Vera unlatches the Velcro strap that attaches the used colostomy bag to Bob. She takes the bag in her hand, quickly takes aim at West and throws it at him.

CLOSE ON BAG

It flies through the air with some of Bob's waste spilling out of it.

STUDENT'S FACES

They watch in horror as this bag moves in the air, toward the stage.

WEST ON STAGE

Vera's aim is perfect - the bag HITS West's mid section and Cradle's waste spurts everywhere on him.

ON CRADLES

A look of satisfaction on both of their faces.

VERA

Get used to that smell, kids. It gets right in your nostrils.

ON WEST

Almost completely covered in this nastiness, West looks out into the house with helpless, vulnerable eyes. He wipes part of his face with his hand, only to get more of the waste on him.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - HOURS LATER

JAKE TIPTON, the auditorium manager, is walking through the house. No one is around but the stage LIGHTS are on.

Jake has a large ring of keys on his belt loop. He looks like a theatre techie, complete with army boots, camouflage head wrap and green jumpsuit.

JAKE

Anyone here-?

He walks onto the stage and sees a puddle of what appears to be some kind of watery substance.

Curious, he kneels down and smells it. It nearly knocks him over.

JAKE

Oh geez.

MOVEMENT from above. Jake looks up toward the grid above the stage.

JAKE

Who's up there?

WEST (OS)

Professor West.

JAKE

You ok?

There is no response.

(CONTINUED)

JAKE

You're not - doing anything?

STAN HOLSTEIN, a young student technician who works at the theatre, enters near the lip of the stage.

STAN

What's going on?

WEST (OS)

No I'm not doing anything - what are you implying?

STAN

He sounds pissed.

WEST (OS)

Would you just care to leave me alone for a while? I've got a lot on my mind - is that Stan Holstein's voice?

STAN

Yeah.

WEST (OS)

We need to schedule a light design meeting soon -

STAN

Sure. Are you coming down?

JAKE

He will - eventually- I hope.

WEST (OS)

Get out of here and leave me be!

Stan quickly leaves. Jake starts to go but looks up again, concerned for West.

JAKE

I'll get a mop -

ANGLE ON WEST

He's lying on his back, above the stage - an odd pattern of LIGHT hits him from below. It's like a nightmare trance he can't wake up from.

(CONTINUED)

WEST

You work hard all your life, just to make something special. And there's always someone there who tries to tear it down. I must concentrate...

West, still flat on his back, closes his eyes and tries to concentrate on staying positive about the production.

SHAKESPEARE (OS)

What you must do is kill the old man - and make the old woman eat excrement.

West turns in the direction of the voice.

REVERSE ANGLE

Will Shakespeare's face is floating in the air. West sits up and marvels at this sight.

SHAKESPEARE

Her husband's excrement, more specifically.

WEST

Oh thou hast requested a rash and smelly deed such as this. O retribution thou callest me and I shall answer - I am yours forever.

SHAKESPEARE

In order to set things right, go to their home tonight. They won't be expecting you -

WEST

But where art this domicile you speak of?

Shakespeare floats closer.

SHAKESPEARE

Check the audition form, nincompoop!

JAKE (OS)

Someone up there with you?

(CONTINUED)

SHAKESPEARE

Tell that ass monkey to piss off.
Does he not know who I -

WEST

No it's just me. All alone with my
Willie.

JAKE (OS)

You have a key to lock up, right?

WEST

Dandy. No worries - thank you.

ON JAKE - SAME

He's looking up toward the grid, with mop in hand.

JAKE

Alright just making sure -

WEST (OS)

Mmm - go away please.

Jake looks discouraged by this remark.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

West's car pulls up to the side of the road, with HEADLIGHTS
on. He cuts the engine, gets out of the car and begins to
walk.

Looking around the developed area, another vehicle's
HEADLIGHTS illuminate West - a blue Toyota Corolla pulls up
next to him.

ON CAR

The driver rolls down their driver's side window, and it's
Linda.

LINDA

What are you doing -?

WEST

Oh hi. Didn't recognize you there.

West strolls up and leans over close to her on the driver's
side of the vehicle.

(CONTINUED)

LINDA

What are you doing here ?

WEST

Oh nothing special - just taking a walk. Nice area -

She reacts oddly to him. She is taken off guard by seeing him.

LINDA

Yes it is. I live here - it's very peaceful. Except for the crazy family next door to me who are probably drug dealers -

WEST

(not listening)

Wonderful - wonderful.

West clears his throat, uncomfortable at the moment.

LINDA

How's that head of yours?

WEST

Oh it's good. Still has some brains contained within which should jettison forth some magical imaginings.

Linda smells the stench on him.

LINDA

Oh - I'm sorry - what is that odor?

WEST

Long story. Uh, I must be off -

LINDA

Okay be careful -

WEST

Always -

He wants to touch her face, but he can't. Too much filth on his hands. He walks away, embarrassed - she looks puzzled as she watches him go.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The Cradle residence is a modest ranch style home in the suburbs of Charlesville. There are outside LIGHTS on.

West walks on the street and when he sees the address on the house, he first looks around to see if anyone notices, then dashes through the front yard.

He makes his way through the front bushes, looks over his shoulder, then gets right up beside the front window.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

West looks inside the home of the elderly couple. His eyes squint and then focus.

POV WEST

Inside the home, Bob is seated in his comfortable living room chair. The light of the TV is on. The elderly man looks to be drifting off to sleep.

There are several pictures of the Cradle couple on the wall. Wedding photos and family photos. It's a warm, lovely home.

Several framed theatrical production posters reveal that Bob has been involved in show business for a very long time.

There is even a framed picture of YOUNG BOB as Hamlet, holding Yorick's skull.

Vera enters and props Bob up in his chair with a pillow. She strokes his white hair and his face. His hand reaches up and touches her hand.

ON WEST

He is taking all of this in. Taking a step back, his emotions start to intervene.

West moves off suddenly toward the road. He puts his hand up to his forehead, thinking he has a fever.

WIDER

West moves on foot toward his destination.

He pulls out his handkerchief, wipes away a tear from his eye and continues to walk -

WEST

What possessed me just now-

He stops and almost falls over. He puts his hand up to his head, rubbing it intensely.

WEST

God. No. This curse is like some sort of fever. And the only cure is Love.

FOLLOWING WEST

He finds his car, a beat up Chevy Cavalier, gets in and takes off.

INT. CAR-MOVING

West is driving and looking around the suburban area as it gets ready for the coming night.

Up ahead, he notices something familiar. He pulls over to investigate.

EXT. ROAD - SAME

West's car pulls close to a driveway - it has a blue Toyota Corolla, much like Linda's.

He gets out of his clunky car and walks toward the front door of nice sized, single family home.

EXT. FRONT PORCH

He rings the DOORBELL. And waits for Linda to answer. Instead, a young well-dressed man wearing glasses, DOUG, opens the door and stares at West.

DOUG

Can I help you-?

(CONTINUED)

WEST
Hello. I must have the wrong house
- does a woman named ...

He concentrates to find her name in his brain.

WEST
... Linda live here?

DOUG
My wife's name is Linda -

WEST
Your wife?

A beat. Doug smells the odor that is caked on West and is repulsed by this strange man. Doug puts his hand up to his nose and mouth.

DOUG
Whoa. Excuse me. I'll get her.

Doug shuts the door on West. West thinks about it for a moment, then dashes off.

CUT TO:

EXT. OVERLOOK - NIGHT

West stands on a hill overlooking the small subdivision - two rows of buildings are laid out before him. Some trees, street LIGHTS compliment the area. He holds a bottle of whiskey in hand.

WEST
(singing)
And let me the canakin clink clink
- and let me the canakin clink. A
soldier's a man, a life's but a
span, why then let a soldier drink!

He swigs from the bottle. He looks tore up, exhausted, almost defeated.

WEST
Wine, ho!

CLOSER ON WEST

He takes another, more extreme swig from the bottle of liquor.

WEST

I'd like to tell all of you ... in this small rotten town, to go fuck yourselves. That would be the end of that. But I'm not going to do that. No. No way in hell you can get rid of me. Not until I've had my say - and that means Hamlet will be made to live, with MY magic, if I have to play every stinking part myself.

He takes one more drink, nearly falls over and tosses the bottle down the hill.

WEST

Yes I quite like that.
AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

BIRD'S EYE VIEW - MOVING

West looks to the heavens making this PRIMAL NOISE.

He becomes a miniature sized figure on this hill overlooking Charlesville.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Dale is sleeping on his cot but the distant echoes of West's PRIMAL SOUND make him stir. His eyes open wide from the noise in his head. He rubs his eyes, like he's had a nightmare.

Dale sits up in bed and looks around in a slight panic. He's wearing a bandage that covers his forehead and cheek. He lifts his sheet and notices a large wet area where he's peed himself.

DALE

Mother 'effin crap.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The cast list of Hamlet is posted.

There are several student actors and actresses looking at the bulletin board with the list. Gloria and Chris walk away first, with Chris scratching his head in reaction. Gloria just looks shocked, then she smiles.

Zareb walks away from the group, after studying the list. He carries his backpack around his shoulder -

ZAREB

What is this guy smoking?

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON GLOSSY 8 X 10

NICK REINHOLD, the young working actor's gloriously produced headshot is framed and hangs in a section of the office at Weebler College's theatre department.

WEST (OS)

He's not a star, he's a working actor and he should be praised for that feat alone -

INT. MAIN OFFICE - DAY

A student interviewer, a young woman WANDA FECK, is talking with West with a small digital voice recorder. She's also got a pen and small notepad.

West holds his coffee mug, and is still waking up from last night. He looks at his watch. Sally is organizing files at her desk.

WEST

There really are no more "stars" - I mean who was the last real one? I can't even remember.

WANDA

So how does it feel to have a former student succeed on the level that Nick has?

WEST

It's a good feeling. Believe me, I'm reminded of that - feeling - every day I'm in here.

(CONTINUED)

Sally smiles and continues working at her desk.

WEST

Have I mentioned the upcoming production of Hamlet I'm about to -

WANDA

(interrupting)

So does Nick stay in touch with you - in between being a celebrity and trying to maintain his personal life -?

WEST

We don't talk that much - but he's coming in soon to do a guest lecture for our acting students - which should give them a good idea of what they're up against - like being unemployed, for example.

Wanda gives him a look of oddness for this remark.

WANDA

But aren't they here to learn that they can succeed like Nick, in the face of all that uncertainty-?

WEST

It's all in how you look at it really. What does "making it" really mean?

WANDA

Nick certainly has -

West looks at her like he could slap her in the face.

WEST

Are we done with this yet?

She pauses the recorder -

WANDA

Excuse me. No they are more questions about Nick I wanted to-

WEST

I just don't know why you have to point out these things - Nick still has plenty of work before he - look, let's talk about my upcoming production of Hamlet, now that's exciting. That's very "now".

(CONTINUED)

WANDA

But the fine arts newsletter isn't interested in that Professor West.

WEST

Well why am I speaking to you then? I've got work to do -

WANDA

Well I -

WEST

Good-bye.

He leaves quickly. Wanda looks perplexed. Sally shrugs her shoulders.

WANDA

Ok. Do I sense some professional envy?

SALLY

Nah. He's not capable of that.

Sally continues working, as Wanda looks around the office, seeing if anyone will speak with her.

CUT TO:

INT. WEST'S OFFICE - DAY

West sits comfortably in his Weebler office, on his couch, reading a book titled Parallel Universe Theory. It's a real page turner.

He's also got a big glass of tomato juice, sitting close.

Chiffon bursts in to his space.

CHIFFON

We need to talk-

WEST

Did you know John, that physicists have determined the existence of other universes? Imagine a parallel universe; you and I could be having this conversation ... somewhere else but it could be slightly different. You might actually be respected in that one.

He turns the page again, smiling.

(CONTINUED)

CHIFFON

You're actually going to do it- aren't you? Casting yourself in the greatest of all acting parts - what the hell is this? This isn't education. This is a friggin' showcase for you.

WEST

You know we're supposed to be teaching these young impressionable minds - what better way to teach than from within the production - ?

Chiffon paces back and forth in the office.

CHIFFON

This is just another opportunity for you to get some stage time and score with the female students.

There is a KNOCK on West's door - and the door cracks open to reveal Sandy peeking in.

CHIFFON

Case in point.

SANDY

Professor?

WEST

Now is not a very good time - can you come back in fifteen minutes?

SANDY

But it's important.

WEST

Can't you see I'm having a heated discussion hyphen meeting with our esteemed professor of musical buffoonery - leave us!

She pulls the door shut.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

Chiffon stands defiantly in judgment of his peer.

CHIFFON

Same old crap- different play. I just don't understand what happened

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CHIFFON (cont'd)
to you. You used to care about the
students, about the work.

West shuts his book and points to his wall.

WEST
(heated)
Do you see these awards? I got
these for thinking outside the
box. I am a progressive
intellectual.

CHIFFON
You'd rather bang chicks than teach
anyone anything about theatre.

WEST
You've always been jealous of me -

Chiffon scoffs at this.

CHIFFON
Do you know that someday one of
your top secret casting couch
sessions will result with you in
the ER, because of a jealous
boyfriend?

WEST
Nonsense.

CHIFFON
Or better yet, one of these young
women, after you destroy what
self-esteem they have, will take
matters in their own hands -

WEST
Before I kick your scrawny ass out
of my office, here's some free
advice -

West throws his book onto the couch and stands.

CLOSER

Chiffon's pacing stops as West puffs out his chest.

WEST
First you need to get laid. I think
the last pussy you saw was when you
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WEST (cont'd)
 came out of your mother's
 womb. Second, come back from 1965
 and go see some theatre from the
 21st century- I always bring fresh
 ideas into my Shakespearean
 productions, and how many times do
 we have to see Tea and Sympathy
 John? Or some tired old musical
 with tap dancing?

Chiffon is incensed. He takes off his spectacles.

CHIFFON
 I don't have to defend my choices -
 I know they're right. Our audiences
 love my work - as well as my
 students. I've been doing this a
 damn lot longer than you have -

WEST
 Yes of course, o wise one.

CHIFFON
 Your ideas for theatre are to
 subvert texts. Classic texts. You
 are not a better writer than
 Shakespeare.

West suddenly looks as if he's going to pass out, he touches
 his forehead. He blinks a couple of times, leaning on his
 desk.

WEST
 I'm a student and teacher, the yin
 and yang, the darkness and the
 light, of William Shakespeare and
 always will be. He is the sole
 reason I am here. Much better than
 you can say -

He mimics a young musical performer.

WEST
 (mocking)
 "You are sixteen going on seventeen
 -" that's your milieu. Bad theatre
 that is vacuous and devoid of
 meaning. My theatre speaks to the
 epicenter of human existence.

CHIFFON

I know for a fact that it takes
nothing short of a genius to act
and direct Hamlet.

West shrugs his shoulders to demonstrate he's fully capable
of doing both.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

On chalkboard - handwritten words "Styles of Acting".

He boldly stands in front of his acting class, wearing a
cape. This class is small consisting of about ten STUDENTS.

WEST

Only real actors do
Shakespeare. That is why we are
devoting this semester to most of
his great works. In this styles of
acting, we'll explore the mythos
behind William Shakespeare - and
hopefully, by the end of the
semester, you'll have a greater
appreciation of his work, his life
and his art. Questions so far?

A perky woman, SUE, sophomore raises her hand -

WEST

Yes?

SUE

Do you like to do improvisation
games?

WEST

I detest improvisation. If I were
to ask William Shakespeare what he
thought about improvisation, he
would say ...

CUTAWAY TO SHAKESPEARE

He stands in another part of the classroom, in front of the
chalkboard.

(CONTINUED)

SHAKESPEARE

Piss on it.

ON WEST

He gestures emphatically to make these points.

WEST

It's the antithesis to good acting. It's mindless, short-cutting, upstaging muck. It messes up the process of good acting. I pray you, avoid it like the plague.

Another student KRIS, androgynous-looking student wearing dark clothes, granola-style, raises their hand. West indicates them, uncertain of their identity.

WEST

Yes, person-

KRIS

What about film vs. theatre?

WEST

I'd rather see a bad play than a good film. You see, all art forms come from theatre. Painting, sculpture, even the dreadful motion pictures, wouldn't exist if not for the beauty of live theatre. There's simply no substitute.

A young man, STUART raises his hand.

WEST

You-

STUART

Professor West, can you talk about any warm up exercises you do in order to prep for a performance?

WEST

Ooh, good question -

REVERSE ANGLE - HALLWAY

Bob Cradle sits on a chair. Seeing them getting closer, he stands. West and his students approach. Cradle's chair sits next to an elevator with an OUT OF ORDER sign on the front.

WEST

You missed our class today. Pity.

BOB

I decided to tell you in person that I will not be taking this class. It would an utter and complete waste of my time.

WEST

I see your sidekick is not with you today.

BOB

My wife Vera. No, she'd rather do many other things than do what I'm about to do -

WEST

What's that-?

BOB

Offer an apology. For the colostomy bag incident.

West raises an eyebrow at this unexpected gesture. Stuart and Sue give West a look. West looks at them and shoos them away. They leave.

WEST

Bob Cradle, you amaze me. First you humiliate me, then want to get back in my good graces. Love me or hate me, make up your elderly mind.

HALLWAY - MOVING

The two continue down the corridor. The janitor with a mop passes them going the opposite direction.

BOB

I am a decent person. And you are not. So I pity you.

A couple of students from class walk through the hall.

(CONTINUED)

WEST

You are an insect. Or some other kind of bug that needs squashed. All I can say to you is that you will never, ever grace the stage at Weebler College. Again.

BOB

How on earth did you get to be in the position you're in?

WEST

Because I'm "the shit". That's why.

BOB

I'll say. You're like a dog turd that sits on the sidewalk for several days under the hot unforgiving sun. Finally it dissipates. I know. I've lived much longer than you. One day, like everything else in this small town, you'll dissipate.

NEW ANGLE ON HALLWAY

They approach an open archway leading to stairs. There's a CAUTION-WET FLOOR sign sitting within the archway.

WEST

So will you old man. So will you.

BOB

Readiness is all, professor. The question is, are *you* ready?

WEST

I was born ready.

West strolls over to the archway. He starts to move down the steps but slips on the wet floor and tumbles down the stairs.

West lands somewhere with a large THUD.

ON LANDING

West is sprawled out at the bottom of the stairs, his man-purse open and papers strewn about. He lies face down on the floor, his cape flipped over his head.

Bob makes his way to the top of the stairs.

BOB
Professor West - are you alright?

West sits up, flailing his arms.

WEST
Get your hands off me, you senior citizen theatre neophyte -

BOB
I'm not touching you.

West attempts to stand but loses his balance many times, his cape getting in the way. Finally he stands and suddenly goes into a spasm, playing these different roles.

WEST
Yes of course Dad. You said you never touched me. But you kicked my ass every chance you got. I even did my chores and that wasn't good enough. Mommy, please talk to him. You love me don't you? You always have. Daddy don't hurt Mommy. What are you doing? Daddy I'll kill you if you touch Mommy again! Stop fighting each other! AHHHHHHH!

West stops and shuts his eyes. Bob remains there, watching this strange man. A small trickle of BLOOD is on West's forehead.

BOB
Your head is bleeding -

West reaches up and touches his forehead. He looks at the blood.

WEST
Sometimes inspiration comes from the most personal moments - knowing that my parents are still with me. Still a part of me. My own blood reminds me of this -

(CONTINUED)

He takes off running down the remaining steps, leaving behind his papers. STUDENTS enter and walk up the stairs.

BOB

Where the devil are you going?

WEST

To creation!

CUT TO:

ON BULLETIN BOARD

West rips down the original cast list and replaces it with a new one, this one has a smear of West's BLOOD on it. The top of the list reads: HAMLET CAST UPDATED.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT - EVENING

Dale sits in front of his desktop computer. A long scar runs from his right cheek up by his temple and toward his hairline.

He visits the website of Weebler College. On the site is the announcement of the Hamlet production with Morris West's headshot. The featured graphic states "Directed by & Starring in the title role..." and the production dates.

Dale's face registers recognition and a desire for retribution.

DALE

Mom!

MYRTLE (OS)

Yeah -?

DALE

Sign me up for those driving lessons, will ya.

MYRTLE (OS)

What??!!!

DALE

You heard me. I'll be taking a trip in the next few weeks. Going someplace special. Should only be about a three hour drive. Guess

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DALE (cont'd)
this could be considered a reunion
of sorts...

He LAUGHS the most evil laugh he can muster. He grabs a dart and throws it toward the closed door.

ON DART BOARD

The dart sticks right in a black and white head shot of West.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Bob and Vera Cradle are seated for dinner.

An exquisite lasagna dish and a healthy portion of vegetables plus a bottle of red wine and two glasses are on the table.

BOB
That man has serious issues. I think he's gone mad. Just like Hamlet -

VERA
Or is he faking just like Hamlet?

BOB
I don't know. We'll just go on, dear. Like we've always done.

VERA
I think it's time you showed this town what you're capable of - after all, you were the finest Hamlet ever to grace Weebler's stage.

BOB
But that was long ago. I don't know if I still have the chops Vera.

VERA
My darling Robert, you will always have the chops - pardon my french, but screw Morris West and the self-righteous horse he rode in on.

(CONTINUED)

BOB

Damn! I'll drink to that.

She gives him a supportive look and smile. He smiles back. They CLINK their wine glasses.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - EVENING

Morris is blocking a scene from Hamlet with his cast: Zareb, Chris, Gloria and androgynous Kris.

All of them have their manuscripts in hand as does Morris. He's standing onstage with them. Most of them have a look of confusion.

Jeff, wearing a headset, is seated in the house with his manuscript.

WEST

Since I will be playing most of these roles, your job as the players will be to support the belief that I am all of the different characters - even though in many of the scenes, I will be dressed in black -

KRIS

You'll look the same for all the characters-

WEST

No, not exactly.

GLORIA

Excuse me when will we start rehearsal?

WEST

We are in rehearsal now.

GLORIA

Oh.

West moves about the stage with manuscript in hand. His approach is rather spastic and uneven.

WEST

Stay with me. I work like lightning ... so where was I -?

(CONTINUED)

JEFF
Act 1 scene 1.

WEST
We begin at the beginning. And we
are going to run the piss out of
this show until it is perfect.

SEQUENCE OF REHEARSAL

MUSIC plays.

The four cast members are standing like a small chorus surrounding West. He goes through a scene by himself and plays Hamlet, as well as many other characters; it's as if he's schizophrenic. He occasionally pops a pill or two.

The "chorus" looks bored, uninterested and generally distracted. Gloria starts to text on her phone. Chris yawns.

West grabs the phone from Gloria and tosses it into the house.

CUT TO:

ON STAGE - DAY

The tech CREW is erecting the large tower of Elsinore that lives on center stage. A couple of techies carry over 2 large Styrofoam balls and place them at the base of the tower.

A PAINTER begins to add paint to the tower which looks like a flesh colored tone.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Chiffon is walking through the box office, toward his office, just as Linda is coming through the opposite hallway.

LINDA
I don't know if you remember me
from the commercial shoot -

(CONTINUED)

CHIFFON

Yes of course. Can I help you-?

LINDA

I'm looking for Farouche. I mean,
Professor West.

Chiffon chortles, as he takes out his office key ring.

CHIFFON

He's either in class or rehearsal.

LINDA

Isn't that his middle name?

CHIFFON

Actually I thought it was Franklin.
Maybe he changed it.

ANGLE ON OFFICE DOOR

Chiffon reaches his door, unlocks it with his key and opens it. Linda is standing close by.

CHIFFON

Would you like to come in. I don't
have class until 10.

They walk into his office.

INT. OFFICE - SAME

Chiffon's office is decorated with musical theatre memorabilia. It's a cozy, welcoming place.

LINDA

He specifically mentioned his
mother being French.

CHIFFON

I'm pretty sure she was
American. His family is from
Ohio. He grew up in the suburbs.
Normal family. Normal life. At
least until a few years ago.

Chiffon stops and ponders that last statement.

LINDA

He lied to me. Why would he do
that.

(CONTINUED)

Sandy suddenly appears in the doorway, looking emotionally drained. She's got a mocha latte in her hand.

SANDY

You're not the only one he lied too. Professor Chiffon, I'm quitting theatre.

CHIFFON

I'm not sure he lied to either of you.

SANDY

What?

Chiffon walks toward Sandy.

CHIFFON

Ok maybe he did lie to you Sandy. I don't know. You shouldn't have put yourself in that compromising situation in the first place.

SANDY

How can you say that?

CHIFFON

I do think West could easily be fired if he did what I think happened with you in his office.

SANDY

(to Linda)

Did you sleep with him?

LINDA

That really isn't your business. But yes I did.

ANGLE ON SANDY

She leans on to confer with them, feeling a caffeine buzz.

SANDY

I didn't sleep with him because he totally freaked me out. Ranting and raving about his new vision and how he'd have to answer to Willie if he didn't set things right.

(CONTINUED)

CHIFFON

Willie is William Shakespeare.

SANDY

Oh yeah. Then he'd get like narcoleptic - would start to talk to me and then pass out. Really bizarre. He'd do this thing where he'd roll his head and chant about some curse.

LINDA

He did mention being cursed.

SANDY

He could like break into these really beautiful sonnets and then suddenly act like he was talking to someone else who wasn't there. I just had to get out of there. This theatre shit is just too weird for me to handle. I'm going into like bowling industry management or plant pathology. I guess I should get to class.

She leaves.

CHIFFON

Good luck.

NEW ANGLE - OFFICE

Chiffon and Linda stand quietly, processing this news.

CHIFFON

He's been wearing some kind of new persona.

LINDA

Ok, will you tell me what's going on-

CHIFFON

Some years ago, Morris staged Hamlet and it was a disaster. He and the lead actor got into a physical fight, and Morris' head was hurt badly. I thought he recovered but ever since he'd become this different person.

(CONTINUED)

LINDA
Oh my god. Not his head.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - MOVING

Dale's SMOKING skull is attached to the dashboard of the old Chrysler LeBaron with Dale behind the wheel. Loud heavy metal MUSIC plays in the vehicle. Dale is decked out in dark clothes, including black weightlifting gloves.

DALE
Hello Charlesville.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY - EVENING

The Hamlet poster - with Morris F. West's prominent image on the poster holding the Yorick skull. The large font graphic reads - OPENING TONIGHT, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET, Curtain at 8pm. Produced by Weebler College's Department of Theatre/Communications.

There are patrons scattering about the lobby, mostly senior citizens. Among them - Vera who looks down the hallway. Bob is not to be found.

ANGLE ON INTERSECTING HALLWAYS

Bob suddenly turns the corner and appears. He's wearing a black cape and floppy beret on his head.

BOB
Will you accompany me, m'lady?

He and Vera, hand in hand, move toward the house entrance as Sally opens the theatre doors. Other PATRONS follow.

INT. AUDITORIUM - SECONDS LATER

Jake wears a wireless headset and stands in the aisle -

JAKE
House is open - repeat the house is open.

CUT TO:

EXT THEATRE BUILDING - EVENING

Under a street LIGHT, two stage members wearing black, TECHIE 1 & TECHIE 2, are SMOKING before the show. They both wear headsets.

Dale appears out of the shadows - and BONKS their two heads together, knocking them unconscious.

INT. AUDITORIUM - MOMENTS LATER

Dale, unnoticed, enters through a door at the back of the house. He looks around, knowing this place and taking it all in. Dale sees the main doors are open and quickly dashes toward the audio/light booth at the very back of the auditorium.

CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM

West sits in front of his make up table - his kit is open and ready to use for character work.

Shakespeare is seen in the mirror. He's looking cool with his sunglasses on. His quill pen in hand, and a book in the other.

WEST

Bring the magic. Only you. Stage Wizard. Renaissance Man. Me? Yes I'm talking with you. Bring it. All the elements are right. Now is the time to show this place what you are truly capable of.

SHAKESPEARE

Opening night brings much excitement, does it not?

WEST

I haven't felt like this since - since I was very young.

SHAKESPEARE

Your first play-?

WEST

I believe it was Twelfth Night -

(CONTINUED)

SHAKESPEARE

Some are born great - some achieve
greatness -

WEST

And some have greatness -

SHAKESPEARE

Thrust Upon Them.

West grimaces and puts his hand to his head - his eyes closed. He sits back in his chair.

WEST

The great of the earth may not be
known to us in person, but we can
live in the company of the great,
through our minds, through reading,
through our aspirations and our
ideals, through our hero worship-

He is looking at himself - studying his own face. He grabs a sponge and starts to apply his base.

WEST

And through our attempt to emulate
the noblest we know.

SHAKESPEARE

I didn't write that - who wrote
that?

WEST

Anonymous.

NEW ANGLE IN ROOM

Linda KNOCKS, then appears in the doorway.

LINDA

Is this a bad time?

West continues to apply some makeup and avoids eye contact.

SHAKESPEARE

Zounds!

WEST

Actually yes it is.

(CONTINUED)

LINDA
Can we talk. Please.

WEST
What about? Do you feel bad about committing adultery? I should, I suppose, but it was the hotness of the moment.

She takes a step into the room.

LINDA
I told you I was married. Unhappily.

WEST
You did?

LINDA
Yes I did. At the bar, remember?

WEST
Oh what does it matter? We did what we did and it's over. We're moving on now.

Shakespeare crosses his arms in defiance.

LINDA
It does matter. I was being honest with you and I don't think I got the same in return. Not that it's really something you can help.

WEST
Excuse me?

LINDA
I spoke with your colleague and he says you've been having memory issues - ever since your injury years ago. Even your personality has changed. I probably made that worse when I ...

West grabs some powder and throws it on his face. He doesn't bother to use the puff. White powder is all over him. He's at a boiling point.

WEST
Leave me woman.

LINDA

Be careful out there. I would tell you the old familiar expression but I don't want to. Just watch your head. OK?

She is gone. West looks back at himself with sadness. In the mirror, Shakespeare remains in his spot.

WEST

We'll always have ... what was the name of that bar?

SHAKESPEARE

I don't know. I'll make something up. How about Smiley's.

WEST

We'll always have Smiley's.

ON MONITOR - SAME

A familiar voice speaks over the PA system.

DALE (VO)

Ten minutes to places- repeat, ten minutes to places.

West reacts to this voice as if its not quite right, then he goes back to his make-up kit, and grabs some eyeliner.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

West stands with his small cast. He's powdered his face so his make-up is even. His hair is streaked with white, and he's wearing a white suit. This is his "Ghost of Hamlet's father" costume.

The rest of the cast members are costumed in black body suits, berets, shoes and vests.

WEST

And remember, no matter what, do not stop the show. Armageddon could be happening outside in this fly-over town and I won't give a damn until this play is completely spent on the audience. Then you and they can experience the end of their lives and the end of everything with the full knowledge

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WEST (cont'd)
and power that Hamlet has imposed
on them - apotheosis is what this
play is about. Spirit is
consciousness. Circle of life.

They all look at him like he is nuts.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

West is making his toward the steps that lead to the stage -
he's so heavily powdered that he leaves a visible trail
behind him.

Chiffon appears from around the corner and intercepts him.

CHIFFON
Morris - don't do this.

WEST
What ever happened to "break a
leg"?

CHIFFON
You have something wrong in your
cranium. I did some research on
brain injury; if you have another
accident with your head, you could
die. Postpone the show. Get
medical treatment before it's too
late.

WEST
You'll say anything so I'll look
like a fool and cancel my
show. Away with you.

West turns to go - Chiffon grabs him by the arm.

CHIFFON
Damn it - you're my friend. Can't
you remember that? I'm asking you,
please ... don't do this.

West turns to his old colleague - and for a moment, he looks
at Chiffon with honest recognition.

WEST
John -

He takes John's hand, and gently brushes it away.

(CONTINUED)

WEST

Don't ever touch me. Not when I'm
in character. Please. Respect the
craft.

Chiffon's face registers lost hope. He grimaces, and turns
to go.

CHIFFON

I can't watch this -

CUT TO:

BACKSTAGE

West wears his headset. He looks around for Jeff who is not
at his station.

WEST

Where the hell is my stage manager
Jeff? Stan - Jake, come in - we've
got to get this show rolling. I'm
going on whether you're ready or
not.

He throws the headset off to get ready.

CLOSER

Unseen to West, Jeff is tied up and gagged, lying behind a
black curtain.

INSIDE BOOTH

Jake and Stan are passed out behind the light board, but
both look unharmed.

A hand reaches over; it wears a skull ring on the index
finger. It takes the house lights out - mild APPLAUSE. Then
the hand hits the play button on the mini-disc player.

A pre-recorded male VOICE comes over the speakers.

VOICE

Welcome to the opening of Weebler
College's new season of terrific
theatre. During tonight's
production, we ask that no flash
photography be taken during the
show.

BACKSTAGE - SAME

West is posing with Gloria as Chris takes a digital shot using the FLASH setting. West almost immediately puts his hand to his eyes like he's going to pass out. Gloria steadies him.

GLORIA

You ok?

WEST

Why yes of course. Why wouldn't I be?

He smiles and gives her a thumbs up.

IN MAIN HOUSE - SAME

The AUDIENCE, modest in size, is settling in for the show.

VOICE (OS)

There will also be one ten minute intermission. Please take a moment to look in your program for a list of our sponsors. Without them, we wouldn't be able to produce the quality theatre that you are about to see. So, sit back and enjoy William Shakespeare's Hamlet like you've never seen it before.

Some more APPLAUSE.

ON STAGE

LIGHTS up.

The set for Denmark is very sparse, except for the large tower, complete with textured layering to suggest a penis. At the bottom of the structure are the two large "gonad" balls.

There is FOG on stage - and a DRUM ROLL cue - followed by dark choral MUSIC.

West's shadow is seen hitting the back wall and he slowly enters. He prances, even using his tiptoes, across the imaginary Denmark landscape. Holding his arms out in an obvious Messianic pose, he flits across the stage and out. A trail of powder follows him.

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS (OS)
'Tis here!

ZAREB (OS)
'Tis here?

Chris and Zareb enter quickly, following West - they move to the down right stage area.

CHRIS
'Tis gone.

ZAREB
It was about to speak when the cock
crew - but then it didn't.

CHRIS
The spirit?

Zareb unknowingly gestures to the large phallic set piece that sits just upstage of them.

ZAREB
The cock.

BACKSTAGE DURING PERFORMANCE

Dale enters and stands in the wings, having slipped by unnoticed.

He stands and observes West onstage.

DALE
(chanting low)
MACBETH. MACBETH. MACBETH.

A sandbag drops from the fly space area and knocks him down. Both he and the sandbag land with a THUD. He rolls off into a dark corner, unseen by the others. Sand is spilled onto the backstage floor.

WEST (OS)
My hour is almost come, when I
to sulphurous and tormenting
flames must render up myself.

MUSIC plays.

CUT TO:

ON STAGE - HAMLET ACT 3, SCENE 4

LIGHTS up.

West is costumed and in heavy make-up to look like Hamlet on one half, top to bottom, and Gertrude, in female drag, as the other half.

He remains in PROFILE as Hamlet and speaks to his other (Gertrude) half. Each time he speaks the other character, he flips to his other profile.

He also takes his voice up in pitch when he plays Gertrude.

WEST

(Hamlet voice)

Now mother what's the matter?

(Gertrude)

Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

(Hamlet)

Mother you have my father much offended.

(Gertrude)

Come come you answer with an idle tongue.

(Hamlet)

Go go you question with a wicked tongue.

He flips back to Gertrude -

WEST

HOW NOW HAMLET!

He/Gertrude does a really bad slap in the air. He turns back as Hamlet and takes the slap in the face.

WEST

Mother!

ON AUDIENCE

They are by all points, reacting negatively to this performance style. There's one student from West's acting class who looks mildly impressed, and is taking notes.

WEST (OS)

(Gertrude)

What's the matter now? Have you forgot me?

(Hamlet)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WEST (OS) (cont'd)
No by the rood, not so -

CUT TO:

BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

West, still dressed as Hamlet and Gertrude, is making his way upstage of the set, out of the audiences' view. Onstage, Kris and Gloria are speaking.

WEST
What the devil is happening to our
sound and light cues -

KRIS (OS)
How now! What hath befallen?

WEST
It's total bedlam out there.

Dale is climbing down from the grid and jumps off the backstage ladder. West notices him, giving him a look of dread.

GLORIA (OS)
Where the dead body is bestowed my
lord, we cannot get from him.

KRIS (OS)
But where is he?

GLORIA (OS)
Without my lord; Guarded, to know
your pleasure.

West raises his fist, then suddenly has a pain in his temple - he puts his hand to his head and squints.

WEST
No! Not you.

DALE
Feeling bad lately Professor?

WEST
You can't possibly be the reason
for my bad luck. Just looking at
you I can tell your whole life is
one bad decision after another -

(CONTINUED)

DALE

Funny I was going to say the same
about you - half man/half woman. I
mean what the fuck?

Dale pulls out a handful of sand and tosses it in West's
face. West stumbles back, flailing his arms -

WEST

Damn you!

DALE

Now go and act -

He pushes West out onstage; West literally falls into his
entrance as Hamlet.

DALE

I'm watching.

ON STAGE - SAME

West as Hamlet gets up and attempts to stay in character -
he wipes his eyes but the more he wipes, the worse it
gets. He rips off his Gertrude side, revealing some black
boxers.

Gloria and Kris see him and look surprised.

KRIS

My joys were never begun!

They both quickly exit. West manages to see them leave
through his squinted eyes.

WEST

Don't leave me. Shit.

He turns and looks at the audience. Horror fills his
expression, and he jumps ahead to any point he can remember
in the text.

WEST

How stale, flat and unprofitable
seem to me all the uses of this
world. Fie on it! 'Tis an unweeded
garden that's grown to -

He stops, for a moment. West SNEEZES - the sand getting in
his nostrils.

(CONTINUED)

WEST

Sneeze.

ON BOB AND VERA

They sit together in the house, just a few rows back from the stage. Vera whispers in Bob's ear. He nods.

ON STAGE - ANGLE SHOWING OFF STAGE

Dale stays close to the wings for some banter.

DALE

Worst Hamlet ever.

West looks off.

DALE

Don't look over here.

West looks back at the audience.

WEST

How all occasions do inform against me and spur my dull revenge -!

DALE

I'll say it's dull.

DIFFERENT ANGLE - FAVORING DALE

Kris suddenly appears, grabs Dale, and they pull away from the entrance area; they move toward backstage.

WEST (OS)

How stand I then - that have a father killed, a mother stained, excitements of my reason and my blood.

ON WEST

He manages to get his eyes open, with some sand in his face. Somehow he's able to focus on this particular moment.

WEST

I can see ... ! Yes, the imminent death of twenty thousand men, that for a fantasy and trick of fame, go

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WEST (cont'd)
to their graves like beds, fight
for a plot wherein the numbers
cannot try the cause. Which is not
tomb enough and continent to hide
the slain?

West makes a sweeping cross toward exit where he came on from.

WEST
Oh from this time forth - my
thoughts are bloody - or be nothing
worth.

West exits as quickly as possible.

IN THE HOUSE

Bob and Vera are watching. Bob rolls his eyes in reaction to West's performance.

BOB
My thoughts BE bloody -

MUSIC cue.

This motivates Bob to suddenly stand and move down the aisle toward the stage.

BOB
Oh what the hell, you only live
once.

DIFFERENT ANGLE - WIDER

In the mostly dark house - Bob speaks his lines.

BOB
To be or not to be - that is the
question.

There is an audible GASP and then small APPLAUSE as many of the patrons recognize Bob's voice.

BACKSTAGE

Dale has taken Kris by surprise and knocked him/her to the ground. West approaches and grabs Dale from behind.

BOB (OS)
I said to be or not to be ...
that's the bloody question I ask.

West looks toward the stage as he grapples with Dale.

FOLLOWING BOB

Bob climbs the steps on house left. He makes it to the stage.

BOB
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to
suffer...

He suddenly COUGHS like he's going to throw up a lung.

BOB
... the slings and arrows of
outrageous cancer, or to take arms
against a sea of trouble, or life
as we know it... and grab it by the
balls and don't let go- and be sure
to have someone who loves you as I
do. Because that's what really
matters anyway.

He clears his throat. A SPOTLIGHT hits him.

CUTAWAY - SILHOUETTE ON BALCONY

A FIGURE holds the SPOTLIGHT directly toward the stage to give Bob his light.

BACK ON BOB

He is looking for his next line on the stage floor. He suddenly realizes where he is in the speech.

BOB
Where was I? Oh thank you. Very
nice. To take arms against a sea
of troubles and by opposing end
them. To DIE. To SLEEP. No
more. And...

(CONTINUED)

He moves gracefully about the stage, as the LIGHT follows him. There is CLUTTER behind him, but he is focused. He is a good Hamlet, in the classical sense.

BOB
... by a sleep to say we end the
heartache and the thousand natural
shocks that flesh is heir to.

BACKSTAGE - SAME

West and Dale are scuffling, then take notice of old man Cradle. Dale has West in a sleeper hold.

WEST
Damn you Cradle.

They suddenly stop their struggle and listen.

BOB (OS)
... tis a consummation devoutly to
be wished.

WEST
You old son of a bitch.

He begins to move but Dale holds him securely.

BOB (OS)
To die. To sleep. To sleep,
perchance to dream.

DALE
He's good. He's better than you,
poser prince.

Dale takes the angry director down onto the backstage floor, holding him.

ON BOB

He's really into this now. An older Hamlet who is reflecting on his existence.

BOB
There's the rub. For in that sleep
of death, what dreams may
come. When we have shuffled off
this mortal coil, must give us ...
pause.

He breaks out of character to address the audience.

(CONTINUED)

BOB

Thank you for allowing me that very brief performance. Unfortunately at my age, that's about all I got left. I would like to dedicate this moment to my lovely wife of 50 years, Vera. You are the reason I am up here tonight.

There is APPLAUSE.

BACKSTAGE - SAME

West is struggling to get up but Dale is keeping him down- his bulk helps out with this activity.

Zareb and Chris enter and react to Bob, then look to the struggle.

WEST

Well don't just stand there - get this hairy patchouli-wearing neanderthal off of me.

Dale pulls them up in a standing position.

DALE

They don't give a rat's ass about you - because you never cared about them. They feel absolutely no loyalty to you whatsoever.

WEST

NO!

He manages to get away from Dale, and run to the wings. He hears the APPLAUSE and knows its not for him. He stops and watches.

ON STAGE

The APPLAUSE continues as Bob bows - and someone, who happens to be his Vera, throws a red rose, which Bob catches.

Bob puts the rose in his mouth, and takes another gracious bow; he quickly exits.

West runs on quickly and has an actor's nightmare moment, mentally running through the play and suddenly coming to:

(CONTINUED)

WEST

There is a special providence in
the fall of a sparrow - if it be
now, it will come. If it not be
now, it will still come. If it be
later, yet it will still come.

Dale bursts onto the stage, holding two rapiers. He wears a mask much like the Phantom of the Opera, but it's black. He throws a rapier to West who catches it.

DALE

The readiness is ALL!

WEST

No -

DALE

I am the evil spirit of York - come
to claim your soul. I am uber -
Hamlet.

West swipes his blade in the direction of Dale.

WEST

Away wicked spirit.

DALE

You swore I would never grace this
stage again, did you not...?

They FIGHT furiously, doing pretty well with their respective sword play. At some point, one of the balls near the tower is ripped out of its place and it flies into the house.

DALE

Isn't this better than fighting by
yourself?

Dale almost immediately gains the upper hand, putting West in a defensive mode.

The AUDIENCE audibly is impressed.

CLOSER ON ACTION

Dale drives West upstage and he puts him up against the large phallic tower - Dale thrusts as West moves quickly.

Dale's rapier goes into the tower and alas, he cannot pull it out. It shakes from the force of his attempt ...

(CONTINUED)

West SMACKS Dale on the ass with his rapier.

DALE
ARGGH! Sonuvabitch -

WEST
I think not. For Hamlet, being me,
wins this round -

DALE
You are no Hamlet - and this -

Dale gestures broadly to indicate the entire production.

DALE
This is all a joke. You're just a
washed up, desperate, sad little
man. I used to admire you- hell, I
even wanted to be you. Then you
betrayed me.

West runs at him, full force. Dale disarms West, and PUNCHES
him in the gut. Audience GASPS. Dale grabs him in a
headlock but West JAMS his elbow into Dale's stomach. Dale
stumbles away.

WEST
You ... fruit-loop, I've got more
talent in my pinkie..

Proudly he displays his pinkie finger to the audience.

WEST
... than you have in your entire
flatulent, ramshackled body.

Dale flips him "the bird", then turns to the audience.

DALE
Whilst I was away, I managed to
dislocate the top chain that holds
this giant wiener schnitzel
upright. Mark me. The castle of
Elsinore will have a sudden and
irreversible case of erectile
dysfunction. One primal chord -
coming up.

Dale runs full force at West.

DALE
AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

He hits West hard and they both tumble into the tower, knocking it over toward the upstage area.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

All of the remaining cast and crew, see the tower falling and they duck for cover. It THUDS to the floor, breaking it into a couple of pieces.

The FOG machine hose flails about as fog covers most of the stage.

INT. BOOTH - SAME

Jake, still dazed from his sleep, pulls Stan up from the floor. They are stunned watching this entire production literally crash to the ground.

JAKE

Play something - anything!

Stan desperately pushes any button that will play whatever the next cue is -

The COCK crows.

ON STAGE

The LIGHTS go out. There is mild APPLAUSE as the curtain closes.

IN HOUSE - SAME

A small but energized AUDIENCE is applauding. Some get up look around like what the hell just happened? Many look back toward the booth. Vera is seen running toward the exit to find Bob.

Nick Reinhold, the TV/film star, is in the audience. He is wearing a look of complete and utter disdain for what he's just witnessed. He looks at his watch. Grabs his cell phone to call whoever will listen about the worst play he's seen.

Linda and Doug are seated together. Doug's arms are crossed in defiance. She is sitting on the edge of her seat, looking toward the stage with great concern on her face.

(CONTINUED)

DOUG

I can't believe you slept with that guy. He's a terrible actor.

She gets up and heads out of the auditorium.

LINDA

Well now we're even.

DOUG

Linda -

As Linda exits, Julia appears and is approached by Jake who quickly explains what happened. He points emphatically toward the booth to illustrate his point.

CLOSER ON FIRST & SECOND ROWS

2 MEN, older gentlemen who have gone to this theatre for years are looking like they've just been ripped off. One of them is holding the large ball from the set in his lap.

OLDER MAN 1

I need a drink after that.

OLDER MAN 2

I need a refund.

Sitting behind them, there's a middle-aged MAN, in his forties speaking to a young WOMAN, his date presumably.

MAN

Another product of our postmodern influence - Hamlet isn't sacred. Is nothing sacred? I mean the classic text subverted by literally asking the audience - who is Hamlet really? He's not real anymore, in terms of the Bloom model of personality. No reference to that whatsoever. Just a large phallic representation of a relic of sexual domination. Deconstructed - literally on stage.

WOMAN

More like demolished. I think you're way over analyzing this - this was obviously not a well-rehearsed show. More chaos than anything else...

(CONTINUED)

They both stand up and move toward the aisle.

WOMAN

... and that wasn't even the entire play, was it? This is just intermission - right?

MAN

Time has no reference to reality- in our postmodern world.

WOMAN

Will you stop relating everything to "postmodernism"? It's damn annoying.

CUT TO:

ON STAGE - BEHIND CLOSED CURTAIN

The set is in pieces, and there is wreckage everywhere.

West is lying on his back on the stage floor, his head with a cut on it. He is unconscious.

Dale is lying with his head resting comfortably on West's shoulder. Dale's mask is torn, his sweaty face showing that he too is unconscious. A big satisfied smile is on his face.

A stage DOOR opens - Chiffon runs in with his cell phone.

CHIFFON

Yes I need an ambulance right now at Weebler College's Warren G. Kunkle auditorium.

He makes his way over to the pair of performers.

CHIFFON

I've got two people unconscious on the stage. They were doing a production of Hamlet and got ... uh.. carried away. Please hurry.

He hangs up and moves toward West.

ANGLE FAVORING WEST

He stirs a bit and opens his eyes. Chiffon kneels down to him.

CHIFFON

Take it easy -

A couple of techs, who were knocked out earlier, appear. The young lady speaks first.

TECH 1

What happened?

CHIFFON

All hell broke loose, that's what happened. Where were you?

TECH 2

Knocked out by that guy. I think.

TECH 1

Yeah, it was him.

They both indicate Dale. Chiffon checks on Dale's status. Linda appears through a side door and makes her way over to the group.

CHIFFON

He's alive. Is that who I think it is?

West tries to sit himself up. Linda immediately goes to him and cradles him in her arms. The two techies support Dale's head as he rolls off of Morris.

LINDA

Did you call -

CHIFFON

On its way -

WEST

Who are you people? What am I doing here?

CHIFFON

Don't move.

WEST

What's happening?

(CONTINUED)

LINDA
You're hurt. Lie still.

CHIFFON
Do you remember anything?

West searches his mind. He looks confused.

WEST
No. I don't. What did I do?

West reaches out, needing affirmation of some kind. Chiffon takes his hand. Linda takes out a handkerchief from her coat and she dabs his forehead delicately.

WEST
What have I done -?

Chiffon is at a loss. Then suddenly he thinks of what to say.

CHIFFON
You just performed the greatest role ever written. It was a smashing success. You are a wonderful actor. And a fairly competent director... don't ever forget that.

West nearly tears up.

WEST
I'm a failure, aren't I?

CHIFFON
No, you're not a failure. I just said you've experienced success. Do you at least know ... who you are?

WEST
I have no idea who I am. I have no idea.

West begins to weep. Chiffon continues to hold West's hand as Linda holds him. Everyone is stunned.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Myrtle approaches her mailbox, opens it and finds a postcard. She takes it out of the mailbox and begins reading.

DALE (VO)

Mom, I hope you understand that I had to settle an old score. Most of my mentors have let me down in my life and in this case, I wanted to do something about it.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

Myrtle stands in front of Dale's Hamlet Shrine and places a framed portrait of her son on a small coffee table.

DALE (VO)

If I figured anything out, it's that sometimes the only person you can depend on is - well you know. Not sure how this is all gonna play out, but I just wanted you to know that I love you. Your son, Dale. PS- please get rid of my Hamlet shrine.

She begins to take down the pictures and memorabilia from the wall.

ON PICTURE

Dale, as Hamlet, is holding the skull of Yorick high in the air. He looks like a serious actor.

DALE (VO)

I think I've experienced way too much melancholy in my life. From now on, I will try to have a more optimistic view on things. Who knows? I could end up becoming a great ... or maybe I'll just be great. Period.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

West is in his hospital bed, with his head wrapped up in a massive bandage. He's hooked up to monitors that display his vitals. Bedsheets cover him. A lunch tray sits close with a plate full of a mostly eaten meat-loaf and veggies.

There is a large bouquet of flowers sitting on the night stand.

CLOSER ON FLOWERS

The attached card reads: HOPE YOU FEEL BETTER. BOB & VERA CRADLE.

FAVORING WEST

West drinks some water out of plastic cup and his bandaged hand sets it down. He grabs an apple from the lunch tray and starts to munch on it.

The sound of TELEVISION program from above.

ON TELEVISION - SAME

A generic news blurb segment with a middle-aged ANCHOR-MAN. He looks very subdued and depressed. His hair and mustache are reminiscent of a bygone era known as the seventies.

ANCHOR

Coming up another look at weather
with our very own Ron Dinsdale.
We'll be back, right after this.

The picture fades and a commercial begins... it's Morris West costumed as William Shakespeare.

WEST

Hello I'd like to invite you to
Weebler College's exciting new
season of theatre ...

ON WEST - SAME

He is looking up at television with the apple stuck in his mouth. He spits it out suddenly. The COMMERCIAL plays on in the background -

West hysterically knocks over his lunch TRAY in order to grab his corded emergency caller; he hits the CALL BUTTON repeatedly.

MOVING

THE NURSE, a middle aged thin woman in her blue nursing uniform, stethoscope around her neck, enters through the doorway. She dashes to West's bed.

NURSE

What is it, hon?

West looks at her with a renewed spirit.

WEST

I know who I am. I remember! My name is Shakespeare. I'm William Shakespeare!

FADE TO BLACK