

GHOST LIGHT II: BREAKING THE FOURTH WALL

by Greg Cummings

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GHOST LIGHT II: BREAKING THE FOURTH WALL

Fifteen More Plays About High School Theatre Life

by Greg Cummings

SYNOPSIS: This follow-up to GHOST LIGHT includes plays ranging from slapstick to the bittersweet: Diva frenemies audition, a rookie actor can't shake his endorphin high, a techie portrays the entire set for a low-budget production, a hopeful boy tries to win back his ex by enrolling in her dance class, a desperate actress attempts a football pre-game warm-up, and an actor writes a play to perform with his crush, unaware that she's a robot.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3-17 females, 3-19 males, 0-2 either)

JUST A SPOONFUL OF SUGAR

LYNETTE (f)

MARK (m)

STAGE MANAGER (m/f)

NUMBER 51 AND NUMBER 52

ANTHONY (m)

WENDY (f)

DIRECTOR (m/f)

DOUBLE, DOUBLE. TOIL? NO TROUBLE!

DIANA (f)

VALERIE (f)

CATHY (f)

ONCE UPON A SCAM ARTIST

ADAM (m)

BRETT (m)

JEFF (m)

OVER BUDGET

JESSE (m)

STEPHANIE (f)

WHAT LIGHT THROUGH YONDER BROKEN WINDOW BREAKS

TRAVIS (m)

CAROLYN (f)

SONNET THE ROBOT

JON (m)

PHOEBE (f)

CATHERINE (f)

ONLY ONE EMBER

NORMAN (m)

JACKIE (f)

BRAVO, ENDORPHINS, BRAVO!

ALEX (m)

ALBERT (m)

KEITH (m)

FINDING PROSPERA'S POWER

SAMMI (f)

BARB (f)

TWO MOONBEAMS

ANNIE (f)

MOONBEAM (m)

VAMONOS, PHYLLIS, VAMONOS!

PHIL (m)

PHYLLIS (f)

THE NEW PUPIL

CARL (m)

DAN (m)

CHELSEA (f)

OUR TOWN

MIKE (m)

TOM (m)

MEREDITH (f)

BREAKING THE FOURTH WALL

JAMES (m)

MELISSA (f)

COMPANY (m/f)

DEDICATION

For my parents.

JUST A SPOONFUL OF SUGAR

by Greg Cummings

SYNOPSIS: A desperate actress resorts to a football pre-game warmup to help her prepare for “Mary Poppins.”

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 1 male, 1 either)

LYNETTE (f).....Accomplished actress. Desperate.
(14 lines)

MARK (m).....Accomplished athlete. Confident.
(12 lines)

STAGE MANAGER (m/f)A good stage manager. Offstage voice. *(3 lines)*

TIME: Opening night of the musical, *Mary Poppins*.

SETTING: A backstage dressing room.

SET: Downstage right, a make-up table and chair.

AT START: *LYNETTE sits downstage right at her make-up table. She faces front and regards herself in her make-up mirror. She is costumed as Mary Poppins. She finishes applying her make-up as she hums “A Spoonful of Sugar.”*

STAGE MANAGER: *(Offstage left.) Ten minutes! Ten minutes to places, Mary Poppins!*

LYNETTE: Thank you, ten! *(To herself in the mirror.)* Perfection! And now, as always, to totally “become” the character. To totally “become” Mary Poppins! *(Confident, she crosses to center. She performs her brief traditional routine of vocal, physical, and emotional exercises to psych herself up. For the first time in her life, though, it doesn’t work. She is not psyched up. She is not Mary Poppins.)* It didn’t work. I don’t understand. I’m not Mary Poppins. *(Nervous, she performs the routine again. Again, nothing.)* It didn’t

work! What do I do? The show starts in ten minutes! (*Frantic, she starts to perform the routine again.*)

MARK enters upstage left. He is costumed as a chimney sweep. He makes no attempt to act as a chimney sweep. He watches LYNETTE.

MARK: Hey, “Mary Poppins,” whatcha doin there?

LYNETTE: (*Startled, stops.*) Look what you made me do!

MARK: Sorry. Hey, I’m Mark.

LYNETTE: I know who you are!

MARK: Look at me, I’m a chimney sweep!

LYNETTE: (*Sarcastically.*) No kidding!

MARK: (*Not understanding sarcasm.*) No, no kidding! See, after football season ended, Ms. Schiller asked me and the whole team to be chimney sweeps in the play. We don’t do anything, we just stand around and, you know, act like, uh, “chimney sweeps,” whatever that is!

LYNETTE: I know! I’ve seen you all at rehearsals! Do you mind?

MARK: Not at all! You want the whole story? OK. Well, since we just won the state championship, and won it big time, she thought we could help get a big audience for the play! So that is the story of why I am here! So, what’cha doin there, Mary Poppins?

LYNETTE: Well, I was trying to psych myself up, before I was so rudely int—

MARK: Psych yourself up? For what?

LYNETTE: To get into character! For the play!

MARK: Hey, good idea!

LYNETTE: What?

MARK crosses downstage center.

LYNETTE: What are you doing?!

MARK: Psyching myself up! To get into character! For the play! Just like you! OK, what do I do? Hey, ya know what, never mind! I’ll just use the same “psych up” I used before every game this season! Hey, why not, it helped us win the state championship! Right? Am I right?!

LYNETTE: (*To the heavens.*) Help me!

MARK: Lemme see. How'd that go, again? Right!

MARK grunts and drops to the floor. He yells and screams his way through a quick, traditional athletic warmup of push-ups, squats, etc.

LYNETTE: Stop it, stop it, stop it!

MARK finishes his routine and stands. Surprisingly, via his routine, he has fully and physically transformed himself into a chimney sweep, complete with a Cockney accent.

MARK: Anything you say, Mary Poppins! Mary Poppins says, "Stop."

This chimney sweep? Well, he stops! (Tips his cap.)

LYNETTE: *(Stunned.)* How did you do that?

STAGE MANAGER: *(Offstage left.)* Places, everybody, places!

MARK: *(Cockney accent.)* "Places?" Blimey, Mary Poppins! You hear that?

LYNETTE: *(Stunned.)* How did you do that?

MARK: *(Cockney accent.)* Better shake a leg, Mary Poppins! I know!

Try this! (Shakes a leg, then clicks his heels together.) Get it?

"Shake a leg?" Oh, Mary Poppins!

MARK laughs, starts humming "A Spoonful of Sugar," and exits left.

STAGE MANAGER: *(Offstage left.)* Places!

LYNETTE: Oh my God! *(To offstage left.)* I'll be right there! *(To herself.)* Oh, heck, what do I have to lose?

LYNETTE, desperate, grunts and drops to the floor. She yells and screams as she tries to copy MARK'S routine. Fade to black.

END OF PLAY

NUMBER 51 AND NUMBER 52

by Greg Cummings

SYNOPSIS: Two diva frenemies audition.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 1 male, 1 either)

ANTHONY (m) Fraught diva. Wendy's frenemy.
(17 lines)

WENDY (f) Fraught diva. Anthony's frenemy.
(18 lines)

DIRECTOR (m/f) A guest director. Offstage voice, in auditorium. *(2 lines)*

TIME: Present

SETTING: A bare stage.

AT START: WENDY and ANTHONY pace and whisper, nervously. Each carries a sheet of paper. WENDY has taped to her shirt a large piece of paper with the number 51 written on it. ANTHONY wears the number fifty-two.

WENDY: This is horrible!

ANTHONY: Horrible!

WENDY: Hiring an outside director!

ANTHONY: To direct the spring musical!

WENDY: He doesn't even know anybody at this school!

ANTHONY: He certainly doesn't know me!

WENDY: Or me! My history! My experience! My training!

ANTHONY: The respect, the near adulation I've generated over the years!

WENDY: And not even bothering to learn our names before the audition! Making us wear numbers! Number fifty-one, indeed!

ANTHONY: Number fifty-two!

WENDY: I am not a number!

ANTHONY: Numbering people? That, my dear, that is... anti-art, that's what that is!

WENDY: It is anti-art! It is the definition of anti-art! It is anti-humanity! Wait. Isn't it funny?

ANTHONY: What?

WENDY: That the two best actors in the school "just happened" to get, "at random," the two highest numbers?

ANTHONY: Wait. You think he planned it this way?

WENDY: Planned it this way? Of course he planned it this way! He's playing a game with us. He has heard about us, and he wanted to save the best auditions for last!

ANTHONY: Saving the best for last! Of course! Ingenious!

WENDY: May the best actor win!

ANTHONY: Which will be you.

WENDY: Which will be you! You're the best!

ANTHONY: No, you're the best!

DIRECTOR: (*From the auditorium.*) Number fifty-one!

ANTHONY: That's you! Wait for me, Wendy, after?

WENDY: Collapsed, by the vending machines, as always, Anthony!

DIRECTOR: (*From the auditorium.*) Number fifty-one?

WENDY: Wish me...

ANTHONY: Break a leg! Always!

WENDY: You're the best!

ANTHONY: No, you're the best!

WENDY: Love you!

ANTHONY: Love you more!

WENDY and ANTHONY: Air hug! (*They air hug.*)

WENDY: (*To DIRECTOR in auditorium.*) Number fifty-one! Coming!

WENDY exits into the auditorium. ANTHONY waves, encouragingly.

ANTHONY: (*Beat, then to himself.*) What a loser.

Blackout.

END OF PLAY

DOUBLE, DOUBLE. TOIL? NO TROUBLE!

by Greg Cummings

SYNOPSIS: Three actresses want to audition for the Scottish Play, but one can't shake her Glinda the Good Witch character from a recent children's theatre experience.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 females)

DIANA (f).....Actress. Best friend to Valerie and Cathy. (23 lines)
 VALERIE (f)Actress. Best friend to Diana and Cathy. (18 lines)
 CATHY (f).....Actress. Best friend to Diana and Valerie. (9 lines)

TIME: Present

SETTING: Bare stage.

AT START: A bare stage. DIANA, offstage left, cackles like a witch. She enters stage left, costumed like a witch, acting like a witch.

DIANA: When shall we three meet again? In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

DIANA cackles and spins. VALERIE, also costumed like a witch, enters stage right. She also acts like a witch.

VALERIE: When the hurly-burly's done, When the battle's lost and won!

VALERIE and DIANA cackle and spin together, then stop. Pause. They scan the auditorium, then call.

DIANA and VALERIE: Cathy?

DIANA: (*Sarcastically.*) Great! Auditions for “The Scottish Play” are in one hour! Mr. Grecko said the three of us could audition together for the witches, and Cathy doesn’t even bother to show up to rehearse!

VALERIE: She’ll be here!

DIANA: How do you know? She’s been ghosting both of us for three whole weeks now!

VALERIE: Oh, wait! I forgot to tell you! Her mom texted me. Cathy was busy all August!

DIANA: Doing what?

VALERIE: Children’s theatre!

DIANA: No! Cathy did children’s theatre? Where?

VALERIE: I dunno, some old family friend of theirs runs a children’s theatre company somewhere out in Ohio and they desperately needed someone to play Glinda the Good Witch in “The Wizard of Oz,” like at the last minute!

DIANA: (*Sincerely.*) And Cathy, being the kind soul that she is, said, “sure,” stepped in and saved the day for everyone!

VALERIE: She did! But I guess it took its toll! Her mom said they worked her like eight hours a day seven days a week!

DIANA: She’s exhausted! That’s why she’s been so incommunicado!

VALERIE: Yeah! She did thirty-five shows in three weeks!

DIANA: Wow! That’s a lot of Glinda the Good Witch!

VALERIE: According to her mom, though, Cathy loved it! She even slips into her Glinda voice around the house!

DIANA: (*Laughs.*) Wow! Now, that I gotta hear!

CATHY, from the back of the auditorium, cackles. VALERIE and DIANA beam and call to her.

VALERIE: (*Friendly kidding.*) Cathy! Right on time!

DIANA: Don’t mind her, we’ve got plenty of time! (*To VALERIE and CATHY.*) Let’s cast our spells, witches! Places!

DIANA exits left, VALERIE exits right. They repeat the earlier sequence: Offstage left DIANA cackles like a witch. DIANA enters, costumed like a witch and acts like a witch.

DIANA: When shall we three meet again? In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

DIANA cackles and spins. VALERIE, also costumed like a witch, enters stage right, acting like a witch.

VALERIE: When the hurly-burly's done, When the battle's lost and won!

VALERIE and DIANA cackle and spin together. CATHY, also costumed like a witch, enters from the auditorium. She also acts like a witch. Unfortunately, CATHY'S voice is still the high-pitched voice she used for Glinda the Good Witch.

CATHY: That will be ere the set of sun!

Only CATHY cackles and spins; VALERIE and DIANA watch, stupefied. CATHY stops and looks at them. The only voice available to her now is her high-pitched Glinda voice. She can't help but speak in that voice for the rest of the play.

CATHY: Hey, come on, witches! What are you waiting for?

VALERIE: Cathy. It's, it's your voice.

CATHY: What about my voice?

DIANA: It's so...

CATHY: What? "That will be ere the set of sun!" (*Realizes.*) Oh my God! It's Glinda! I'm still Glinda! I can't get rid of Glinda! (*Falls to her knees.*) Oh! I've ruined everything!

DIANA: What do you mean?

CATHY: Well, I can't audition sounding like this! You'll have to replace me!

DIANA: What?

VALERIE: Never! We've been planning this audition together for too long!

DIANA: Valerie's right!

VALERIE: "All for one, and one for all!"

DIANA: We audition together, or not at all!

CATHY: But what about, you know (*Points to her throat.*) Glinda?

DIANA: I've got it!

VALERIE: You've got what?

DIANA: Follow me! You'll love it!

CATHY and VALERIE: OK...

DIANA: Let's cast our spells, witches! Places! And follow my lead!

They repeat the earlier sequence: DIANA, smiling, exits left. VALERIE, confused, exits right. CATHY, confused, exits into auditorium. Pause. Offstage left DIANA cackles like Glinda, then enters, stage left. Beaming, DIANA'S replicates CATHY'S high-pitched Glinda voice.

DIANA: When shall we three meet again? In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

DIANA cackles and spins. VALERIE enters right, laughing. She follows DIANA'S lead and also replicates CATHY'S Glinda voice.

VALERIE: When the hurly-burly's done, When the battle's lost and won!

VALERIE and DIANA laugh, cackle and spin. CATHY cackles and enters from the auditorium. She, of course, still sounds like Glinda.

CATHY: That will be ere the set of sun!

ALL cackle like Glinda, hold hands and spin.

ALL: That will be ere the set of sun!

ALL cackle like Glinda, and fall to the floor laughing.

DIANA: (*In a Glinda voice.*) Best! Audition! Ever!

Blackout.

END OF PLAY

ONCE UPON A SCAM ARTIST

by Greg Cummings

SYNOPSIS: A rookie actor pays a techie scam artist to help him prepare for a show.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 males)

ADAM (m)..... Techie. Scam artist. (22 lines)

BRETT (m) Rookie actor. Gullible. (5 lines)

JEFF (m) Stage Manager. Cynical. (16 lines)

TIME: Five minutes before the start of *Once Upon a Mattress*.

SETTING: Backstage.

SET: Downstage center a make-up table and chair. On the table is a crown.

AT START: BRETT stands downstage center behind the make-up table and chair. On the table is a crown. He is costumed as King Sextimus from “Once Upon A Mattress.” His eyes are closed.

ADAM: (Offstage right, sonorous.) And so, it’s come to this: the actor’s final preparation.

BRETT opens his eyes, and sits.

ADAM: (Offstage right, sonorous.) After the anxiety-filled audition process, and the months of grueling rehearsals, it has all come down to this—

JEFF: (Off upstage left.) Five minutes!

ADAM: (Offstage right.) It has all come down to this: an actor regarding himself in a mirror. Regarding the character he’s created, the character he’s become: King Sextimus in “Once Upon A Mattress.”

JEFF enters up stage left. He is the stage manager and wears all black. BRETT doesn't react.

JEFF: Brett? Five minutes.

ADAM: (*Offstage right.*) The artist has, in effect, become the art!

JEFF: (*To offstage right.*) Adam?

ADAM: (*Offstage right.*) And now, it is time for the actor's final vocalization and centering exercise, which he must enact away from everything and everyone, isolating himself, even from his own mirror image.

BRETT, as if in a trance, exits downstage left.

JEFF: Hey Brett: five minutes. I said: five minutes. What the...?

ADAM enters stage right. A techie, he wears all black. He carries a piece of paper.

ADAM: Jeff! Hey, how ya doin', buddy?

JEFF: Adam! How am I doing? What are you doing?

ADAM: What do you mean?

JEFF: Let me rephrase that....

BRETT vocalizes offstage downstage left.

JEFF: What fresh scam are you perpetrating on this rookie actor?

ADAM: Scam? Me?

JEFF: "The artist has, in effect, become the art?" What's the angle?

ADAM: Angle? No angle!

BRETT vocalizes offstage downstage left.

ADAM: OK! Hey, so listen, the kid was nervous, OK?

JEFF: So what, you wrote an internal monologue for him?

ADAM: It was basically his idea! I call it, "the actor's guiding voice!" Snappy, eh?

JEFF: And you're reading it out loud, to him, before the show?

ADAM: To help him, ya know, be a better actor, or whatever. *(Laughs.)*

Hey, what can I say? Morgan Freeman wasn't available!

JEFF: And you're doing all of this out of the goodness of your heart?

ADAM: Hey, you know me, I love the theatre!

BRETT vocalizes offstage downstage left.

ADAM: He sounds good right?

JEFF: Well, yeah, but...

ADAM: Quiet! Here he comes! *(Grabs JEFF by the arm.)* Watch this!

ADAM drags JEFF offstage right. BRETT, confident, enters downstage left. His confidence continues to grow as...

ADAM: *(Offstage right.)* And now, the actor, totally prepared, totally confident in his abilities, totally "into" character, is ready to be: King Sextimus!

BRETT: *(Confident, calls off upstage left.)* Prepare my royal carriage!

BRETT, triumphant, exits upstage left. He leaves his crown. JEFF and ADAM enter stage right.

JEFF: *(Amazed.)* Well, I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own two eyes!

ADAM: *(Noticing the crown.)* Um. We should go!

JEFF: Seriously! What you did for that guy! A rookie! Going out of your way to do something, something kinda nutty, but something that resulted in a much more confident actor!

ADAM: *(Nervous.)* Yeah, I've really turned over a new leaf, we should go now.

JEFF: And all out of the goodness of your heart! Adam, I misjudged you! Wow! Good for you, man!

BRETT rushes in from upstage left.

BRETT: Forgot my crown!

ADAM: Right! Here you go! *(He tosses BRETT the crown.)* Better go! Big show tonight! Big show! Big!

BRETT: Oh, and I almost forgot!

ADAM: Oh no, no, no need, we can take care of that later! After the show!

BRETT: No, no! A contract is a contract! *(Reaches into his costume shoe, pulls out two ten dollar bills, and hands them both to ADAM.)*
That's ten dollars for writing the inner monologue, and ten more dollars for reading the inner monologue, right?

ADAM sheepishly accepts the bills.

ADAM: Um. Right.

BRETT: Adam, I don't know how to thank you!

BRETT exits upstage left.

JEFF: The goodness of your heart? Right!

JEFF exits left, shaking his head.

ADAM: Hey! Twenty bucks is a bargain for that service! That kid would've paid fifty! Jeff, trust me! Ya gotta trust me, man!

ADAM exits after JEFF. Blackout.

END OF PLAY

OVER BUDGET

by Greg Cummings

SYNOPSIS: A techie happily portrays the set, the lights, and the music for an extremely low-budget production of “Into the Woods,” much to the consternation of a high-strung actress.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 1 male)

JESSE (m)..... Fun-loving techie. (9 lines)
STEPHANIE (f)..... High-strung actress. (13 lines)

TIME: Tech. rehearsal for “Into the Woods.”

SETTING: A bare stage.

AT START: A bare stage.

STEPHANIE: (Offstage right.) Hey! Wait a minute! What is this?
What’s going on?

JESSE enters stage left. He wears all black. The front of his shirt reads: “Techies...”

STEPHANIE: (Offstage right.) No! This isn’t right, this just isn’t right!

JESSE crosses to upstage center. When he faces upstage we see that the back of his shirt reads: “...do it in the dark.”

STEPHANIE: (Offstage right.) No! I am a senior! This is my final spring musical ever! Come on! I want some answers here, and I want them now!

JESSE faces the audience and raises his arms like tree branches.

STEPHANIE: (*Offstage right.*) That's it!

STEPHANIE enters. She is dressed in a t-shirt, jeans, and a red hoodie. She doesn't notice JESSE. Outraged, she addresses the booth in the back of the auditorium.

STEPHANIE: Is any one from the costume staff out there? This is ridiculous! This is supposed to be "Into the Woods!" I'm supposed to be Little Red Riding Hood! Little Red Riding Hood is supposed to wear a Little Red Riding Hood costume! Little Red Riding Hood doesn't just wear a red hoodie!

JESSE: (*Groans.*) Ow. (*Lowers his arms and massages them.*)

STEPHANIE: What are you doing here?

JESSE: What? Sorry. (*Raises his arms again.*) I'm tech.

STEPHANIE: I know that!

JESSE: For "Into The Woods."

STEPHANIE: I know that! What are you doing on stage?!

JESSE: Oh, didn't you hear? I'm the woods.

STEPHANIE: Excuse me?

JESSE: Yeah, Mr. Jacobs went over budget on the set for "Oklahoma" last fall, so...

STEPHANIE: (*Losing it.*) Wait. So—you're the woods? You're the entire woods?

JESSE: Yep! Oh, hey, plus, I'm also... (*Removes a flashlight from his back pocket and turns it on.*) All the lighting and special effects! Pretty cool, huh? (*Waves his flashlight around.*)

STEPHANIE: (*Losing it.*) You're kidding me, right? (*To the booth.*) Mr. Jacobs, tell me he's kidding!

JESSE: Oh, plus, I'm also... (*Takes a kazoo from another pocket.*)

STEPHANIE: (*Losing it.*) No...

JESSE: Oh, yeah! The musical director also went over budget on the pit band for "Oklahoma," so...

STEPHANIE: Don't you dare!!

JESSE: Hey! I know! Little Red Riding Hood, right? Let's take it from your entrance! With feeling!

JESSE spreads his arms like branches. He waves his flashlight around and hums joyously into the kazoo. (He's not a good hummer.) Overcome, STEPHANIE faints. Blackout.

END OF PLAY

DO NOT COPY

WHAT LIGHT THROUGH YONDER BROKEN WINDOW BREAKS

by Greg Cummings

SYNOPSIS: An actor and an actress can't control their contempt for each other, even as they rehearse a scene from "Romeo and Juliet."

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 1 male)

TRAVIS (m) Spiteful actor. (29 lines)

CAROLYN (f) Spiteful actress. (29 lines)

TIME: Present.

SETTING: Outside an acting class.

SET: Two chairs, center.

AT START: TRAVIS and CAROLYN enter left, each carrying a folder. They sit. They hate each other.

TRAVIS: Oh! My! God!

CAROLYN: Shut up!

TRAVIS: You shut up! I hate you!

CAROLYN: I hate you double! I can't believe I ever dated you!

TRAVIS: I can't believe I ever dated you!

CAROLYN: Once was enough!

TRAVIS: Once was more than enough!

CAROLYN: That "once?" Nearly killed me!

TRAVIS: I'm dead now!

CAROLYN: I'm dead! I'm buried! I'm in the ground! Six feet under!

TRAVIS: Idiot!

CAROLYN: Fool!

TRAVIS: Oh! My! God!

CAROLYN: Stop saying that! Come on, let's get this over with!

CAROLYN and TRAVIS rip open their folders and take out some assignment sheets.

CAROLYN: (*Reads.*) "Acting II Assignment."

TRAVIS: I can read!

CAROLYN: Can you?!

TRAVIS: (*Reads.*) "Passion in Shakespeare." Shakespeare? No! Oh! My! God!

CAROLYN: One more "Oh my God," Travis, and I'll drop you like a rock! (*Reads.*) "Rehearse the below scene from Shakespeare, then answer the question on page two. Your assigned play is..."

CAROLYN and TRAVIS: (*Read.*) "Romeo and Juliet."

TRAVIS: "Romeo and Juliet?" Oh! My!

CAROLYN: What did I just say?!

TRAVIS: Is this a joke?

CAROLYN: No! You're the joke!

TRAVIS: Am I? Well, then: Ha! Ha!

CAROLYN: You go first!

TRAVIS: You are not the boss of me!

CAROLYN: (*Pointing to his assignment sheet.*) Romeo speaks first, moron!

TRAVIS: I knew that! I was testing you, cretin!

CAROLYN: Read, dope!

TRAVIS: Fine! Quiet! Genius at work! (*Stands, then reads/acts his monologue.*)

"If I profane with my unworhiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a gentle... kiss."

CAROLYN stands and slowly applauds.

TRAVIS: (*Sitting.*) Yes. Thank you. Finally.

CAROLYN: What "thank you?" Your acting stunk so badly I have to scatter the fumes! (*Her "applause" morphs into a "scattering the fumes" motion.*) Give me an hour or two!

TRAVIS: Fine! Your turn, Meryl Streep!

CAROLYN: Fine! Watch, listen, and learn! (*Reads/acts her monologue.*)

“Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
For saints have hands that pilgrims hands do touch,
and palm to palm is holy... palmer's... kiss.”

TRAVIS stands and frantically searches his pockets.

CAROLYN: What are you doing?

TRAVIS: Trying to find your “Worst Actress in the History of the World” award, it's got to be here somewhere! And, boy, you earned it! You just earned it big time!

CAROLYN and TRAVIS face off.

CAROLYN: Take it back!

TRAVIS: You take it back!

Sheets of paper fall from their folders.

TRAVIS: What's that?

CAROLYN: Page two?

TRAVIS: Of what?

CAROLYN: Of the assignment? “Rehearse the below scene from Shakespeare, then answer the question on page two.” Duh?

TRAVIS: I knew that! I was testing you again!

CAROLYN: Jerk!

TRAVIS: Jerk!

CAROLYN: “Jerk?” How original!

CAROLYN and TRAVIS each pick up a page two.

CAROLYN and TRAVIS: (*Read.*) “Romeo and Juliet found passion. What are your passions?” What are our passions? Oh! My! God!
(*They laugh and start to exit left.*)

CAROLYN: What are our passions?!

TRAVIS: What is wrong with this guy?!

CAROLYN: Our teacher is such a dork!

TRAVIS: Where does he get such stupid assignments?!

CAROLYN: www dot worst teacher in the world dot com!

TRAVIS: Good one!

CAROLYN: Shut up!

TRAVIS: You shut up!

CAROLYN and TRAVIS exit left. Blackout.

END OF PLAY

DO NOT COPY

SONNET THE ROBOT

by Greg Cummings

SYNOPSIS: A young man rehearses a Shakespeare sonnet with his crush, until he realizes she's a robot.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females, 1 male)

JON (m) Hopelessly crushing on Catherine.
(31 lines)
PHOEBE (f) Low-key Robotics Club President.
(15 lines)
CATHERINE (f) Actually a Catherine robot. (5 lines)

TIME: After school.

SETTING: A stage.

SET: Two swivel chairs, on wheels, center.

AT START: JON sits in one of the chairs, with a collection of Shakespeare's Sonnets. He checks the time, crushes on CATHERINE, and chides himself.

JON: Oh, she'll never show! And why should she? I'm me, and she's, well, she's Catherine! And why did she sign up for the "Shakespeare's Sonnets After-School Activity" anyway? And why did she agree to rehearse the first sonnet with me? Me! Who am I, anyway, compared to her?

CATHERINE: (Offstage left.) Jon?

JON: (To himself.) Unfortunately, yes, that's who I am. (Stands.) I can't do this! (Turns to exit right, then stops.) Wait a minute. Why can't I do this? This might be the only time in my entire life that I will ever get the chance to speak to her! Or anyone like her! Risk it, Jonny-boy! Come on, for the first time in your life, take a chance! (Sits and

calls to offstage left.) I'm on stage, Catherine! *(To himself.)* You've got this, Jon! Come on, buddy! *(Tries to prepare himself.)*

CATHERINE enters, stage left, carrying her copy of Shakespeare's Sonnets. Walking rather mechanically, she crosses and sits in the other swivel chair.

JON: Catherine, hi, Catherine, hi, I'm Jon, you know that, "Shakespeare's Sonnets," eh, best after-school activity ever, am I right, am I right? *(Chiding himself.)* Smooth.

CATHERINE: *(Rather mechanically.)* So: Sonnet Eighteen?

JON: What? Sonnet Eighteen? That's the sonnet you want? Then that's the sonnet you will get! *(Flips through his book.)* I mean why not just jump right into it, eh? *(Chides himself.)* Stop talking, Jon. *(Finds it.)* Here we are! Sonnet Eighteen! *(Glances at it, then to himself.)* Whoa. This is one of those major love sonnets.

CATHERINE: You read.

JON: Excuse me?

CATHERINE: You read. You read it to me. I'll react.

JON: Acting, and reacting. Got it. *(To himself.)* Jonny, she wants you, she wants you bad, she wants you to read a Shakespeare love sonnet to her, and then she wants to react to it, to a love sonnet, that you read to her, stop talking, you're talking out loud, she can hear you!

CATHERINE: I'm ready, Jon.

JON: She's ready Jon, oh my God, she's ready! This is it, Jonny-boy, oh my God, this is it! *(To himself.)* Stop talking, oh my God, stop talking! *(To the heavens.)* Thank you! *(To CATHERINE.)* So I will read! And you will react! *(Reads.)* "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Thou art more lovely, and more temperate."

CATHERINE twitches, slightly.

JON: *(Happy.)* Oh, Catherine! *(Continues reading.)* "Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, And summer's lease hath all too short a date."

CATHERINE twitches more, and makes a soft whirring noise.

JON: (*Happier.*) Oh, Catherine! (*Continues reading.*) "Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, And often is his gold complexion dimmed."

Suddenly, CATHERINE twitches with her whole body.

JON: (*Happiest.*) Oh, Catherine! I love you, too, I love you, too!

CATHERINE twitches wildly and makes loud whirring noises. JON copies her twitching and whirring!

JON: Yes!

CATHERINE twitches more and makes louder whirring noises! JON copies her!

JON: Yes! Yes!

CATHERINE bolts to a standing position, twitching and whirring! JON copies her!

JON: Yes! Yes! Yes!

They twitch and whir side by side! Suddenly, CATHERINE stops. JON stops.

JON: No.

CATHERINE sputters.

JON: No, no.

CATHERINE collapses in the chair, motionless.

JON: No, no, no! Catherine! (*Sits, touches CATHERINE'S arm and tries to rouse her.*) Oh my God! Catherine! Your arm! It feels like plastic!

PHOEBE: (*Offstage left.*) Damn!

JON: Phoebe? Phoebe! Over here! Quick!

Enter PHOEBE, slowly, stage left, intently focused on her iPad, and crosses to CATHERINE.

JON: Phoebe! Quick! It's Catherine! Her arm feels like plastic!

PHOEBE: Her arm is plastic.

JON: What?

PHOEBE: Her arm. It's plastic.

JON: What are you talking about?

PHOEBE: Her arm is plastic. She's all plastic. She's a robot.

JON: She's a what?

PHOEBE: That Catherine? She's a robot.

JON: A robot?

PHOEBE: Yeah. Not bad, eh?

JON: (*Stunned.*) A robot? But how did you...?

PHOEBE: Hey, I'm the award-winning president of the Robotics Club!
But, wow, the reception in here is horrible. Watch.

PHOEBE touches her iPad, prompting CATHERINE to sit up. Suddenly, CATHERINE twitches and collapses back into the chair.

PHOEBE: See what I mean? No signal. (*Slowly walks about, trying to find a better connection with her iPad.*)

JON: Um. Phoebe? Where's the real, um, human Catherine?

PHOEBE: Huh? Oh. Softball.

JON: Softball?

PHOEBE: Yeah. I found out she dropped Shakespeare for Softball so
I thought I'd try and fool you with "Robot Catherine" here.

JON: Um. OK. Why?

PHOEBE: I dunno. Just to see if I could. You know, science. Fun.

JON: Fun? OK...

PHOEBE, still focused on her iPad, starts to exit left.

JON: Hey, Phoebe, where you going?

PHOEBE: Back to Robotics Club. I think I need a new router.

JON: *(Standing.)* Can I come? It looks like I'll need a new after-school activity.

PHOEBE: Whatever. *(Continues her exit left.)*

In joining PHOEBE, JON unconsciously grabs CATHERINE'S chair and starts pulling it, and CATHERINE, with him.

PHOEBE: *(Still focused on her iPad.)* Uh, Jon?

JON: Yeah?

PHOEBE: She's a robot.

JON: What? *(Looks at CATHERINE.)* Oh, right. A robot. *(Sighs and lets go of CATHERINE'S chair.)*

PHOEBE rolls her eyes and exits left, still focusing on her iPad. JON, dejected, exits, left. Pause. CATHERINE twitches one last twitch, then stops. Blackout.

END OF PLAY

ONLY ONE EMBER

by Greg Cummings

SYNOPSIS: Norman tries to win back his ex by enrolling in her dance class and choreographing a dance for her, but she “needs more space.”

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 1 male)

NORMAN (m)..... Hopeful to the point of delusion.
(19 lines)

JACKIE (f)..... Dancer. Calm. *(18 lines)*

TIME: After school rehearsal.

SETTING: A bare stage.

AT START: JACKIE, center stage, moves one arm up and down.

NORMAN: *(Offstage right.)* Whoa, whoa, whoa! What is that?

JACKIE: *(Stopping.)* Norman?

NORMAN enters stage right and points at JACKIE.

NORMAN: That! What is that? *(Mimics and mocks JACKIE'S arm motion.)*

JACKIE: Um... fire?

NORMAN: Fire?

JACKIE: The Arm of Fire solo that you're choreographing for our dance class? I thought I'd rehearse it before you got here.

NORMAN: Arm of Fire solo? You call that an Arm of Fire solo, Jackie?

Ha! I don't think so! This, this is an Arm of Fire solo! *(Manically moves his arm, but soon stops abruptly, in pain.)* Ow!

JACKIE: Norman?

NORMAN: I'm fine.

JACKIE: So, do you want it, um, faster?

NORMAN: Faster? No, I don't want it faster, Jackie, I want it to have more heart!

JACKIE: More heart?

NORMAN: Yes, Jackie, your arm needs more heart! The entire Fire Dance needs more heart! Even the beginning! It should look like this: *(Manically dances with his whole body, but soon falls to the floor, in pain.)* Ow! I'm fine!

JACKIE: You don't look fine, Norman.

NORMAN: Well, I'm not fine, Jackie! All right: Why did you dump me?

JACKIE: I needed my space.

NORMAN: *(Mocking.)* Oh! You "needed your space!"

JACKIE: I still need my space, Norman.

NORMAN: So why did you volunteer to be in my Fire Dance?

JACKIE: I didn't.

NORMAN: What?

JACKIE: I didn't volunteer. The teacher assigned me. So, I had to.

NORMAN: Oh.

JACKIE: Norman, listen, you're not a dancer, and you're not a choreographer. You only wormed your way into my Dance Composition class because you want me to take you back.

NORMAN: OK! So? Fine! Well?

JACKIE: Well what?

NORMAN: Take me back!

JACKIE: No.

NORMAN: Come on, Jackie!

JACKIE: *(Calmly.)* Norman, listen to me: For the last time, we're through. *(Turns to exit.)*

NORMAN: Wait! Um! What about the Fire Dance... Finale? You'll love it!

JACKIE: *(Stopping.)* There's a Fire Dance Finale now?

NORMAN: Yeah. I... I... just choreographed it! And it's... a duet! For you and me! Yeah, that's it! I call it, "The Fires of Love Never Really Die, Jackie, They Remain as Embers, Embers Ready to Come Back to Life at Any Moment!" It'll be fun! Watch! The fire has died out, you see, but not really! We're still embers, see! And we glow, and we're side by side! I start! *(Still on the floor, hisses and writhes but stops, in pain.)* Ow! I'm fine. And now you enter, Jackie, and you're an

ember, too, and you're right here, by me, by my side, right next to me!

JACKIE: I'm going to the library, Norman.

NORMAN: No! Don't! Look! OK! We're not side by side! Our embers are not side by side any more! Look! I'm scooching over! (*Scooches away from her a bit.*) My ember is scooching over for your ember, Jackie! See? My ember wants only the best for your ember, Jackie! My ember understands the error of its ways now and it wants to give your ember all the space it needs!

JACKIE: Goodbye, Norman. (*Exits stage left.*)

NORMAN: Jackie, look! Your ember has all the space it needs now! All the space it will ever need! But... I can still scooch more! Jackie, please, for God's sake, look at me, I'm an ember, and I'm scooching! I'm scooching, Jackie, scooching, scooching, all for you! (*Scooches.*) Ow! (*To no one, sadly.*) I'm fine. (*He's clearly not.*)

Blackout.

END OF PLAY

BRAVO, ENDORPHINS, BRAVO!

by Greg Cummings

SYNOPSIS: After receiving resounding applause after a show, a science geek (and first time actor) experiences an endorphin high that he can't shake.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 males)

ALEX (m)..... Science geek. (11 lines)

ALBERT (m)..... Science geek. (10 lines)

KEITH (m)..... Science geek. Rookie actor. (2 lines)

TIME: An hour after the final performance of "Little Shop of Horrors."

SETTING: A bare stage.

AT START: ALBERT sits downstage left, typing intently on his laptop. He never looks up from his laptop. KEITH, clad all in black, is upstage center. He is possessed by a euphoria and remains that way for the entire play.

KEITH: Whee! (Runs to downstage center, then to the auditorium.)
Thank you! (Bows, then runs back to upstage center.)

ALEX: (Offstage left.) Keith! Hey! Where are you, man? The Science Fair is in a week! And we still need a topic! Come on, man, we gotta win the Science Fair at least once before we graduate! (Enters stage left. He doesn't yet notice ALBERT.) Keith?

KEITH continues to yell "whee," run downstage, say "Thank you," bow, run upstage, and repeat.

ALEX: Keith?

ALBERT: Endorphins.

ALEX: Albert?

ALBERT: It's the endorphins.

ALEX: What's the endorphins?

ALBERT: (*Intently typing.*) Do the math: Keith's not an actor, he's a science geek. He's one of us. Why he auditioned to be the Venus flytrap in "Little Shop of Horrors" I'll never know, but he did. And why he got seven standing ovations tonight, I'll never know, but he did. And, by my calculations, all that applause must have...

ALEX: ...overly stimulated his pituitary gland!

ALBERT: Exactly! Which, in turn, must have released an insane amount of...

ALEX: Endorphins! Of course! Endorphins! And now all those endorphins are forcing him to keep bowing to an empty auditorium, even though the show ended an hour ago! But how do we stop him?

ALBERT: Stop him? Why stop him?

ALEX: We need to work on our Science Fair project!

ALBERT: Not anymore!

ALEX: What? (*Crosses to ALBERT.*)

ALBERT: (*Holding up his iPhone.*) I've been recording his every move!

ALEX sits next to ALBERT.

ALBERT: And (*Re: his laptop.*) I've been tracking his vitals via his fitness watch! Monitoring his pulse! His heart rate! His O₂ levels!

ALEX: OK. So, Keith is our entry for the Science Fair this year?

ALBERT: Correction: Keith will be our winning entry for the Science Fair this year!

ALEX: I dunno.

ALBERT: Well, it's sure better than our Science Fair entry from last year!

ALEX: I dunno. I kinda liked: "Stuff We Poked with a Stick."

KEITH: Whee!

Blackout.

END OF PLAY

FINDING PROSPERA'S POWER

by Greg Cummings

SYNOPSIS: An intuitive actress and a scholarly student director clash over how to block the opening scene of "The Tempest."

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females)

SAMMI (f) Intuitive actress. (27 lines)

BARB (f) Scholarly student director. (24 lines)

TIME: After school rehearsal.

SETTING: A bare stage.

◆ ◆ ◆

AT START: SAMMI, in long flowing robes, dances all about the stage powerfully, like a modern dancer. She stubs her toe, and stops.

SAMMI: Ouch! (Practices another, similar flowing dance, stubs her toe again, and stops.) Ouch! Damn! Come on, Sammi! (Starts to dance a third dance.)

Enter BARB, shy, left. She carries a binder and a copy of Shakespeare's "The Tempest."

BARB: Oh. Oops. Sorry.

SAMMI: (Stubs her toe and stops.) Ow!

BARB: Oh! Sorry, Sammi, I...

Quickly, BARB exits left.

SAMMI: (Calls off left.) Not so fast! Barb! Get back here! Now!

Slowly, nervously, BARB enters and stays stage left.

SAMMI: So, Mr. Gardner cast me as Prospera in his new production of “The Tempest,” but he doesn’t quite trust me, does he?

BARB: Excuse me?

SAMMI: He heard that I was going to block myself into the opening scene without his input, so he sent you, his Miss Bigshot Student Director, to talk me out of it!

BARB: Well, actually...

SAMMI: Well, not gonna happen, Barb! And you can tell Mr. Gardner for me that this Prospera is gonna be on stage at the beginning of the play, actually and physically causing the tempest that starts the show! And I don’t care what you learned in your weird little Shakespeare camp this summer!

BARB: Oh, actually, it was Oxford University in England. I studied on full scholarship. I actually won their highest award for my dramaturgical research paper: “Shakespeare, Women, and Power.”

SAMMI: (*Sarcastically.*) Oh, did you now? Did you actually? Well, lah dee dah! How English! How veddy veddy English of you!

BARB: Um. Thank you?

SAMMI: Don’t thank me! You’re not welcome!

BARB: I...

SAMMI: Listen! We’re putting on a show here, not writing a dissertation!

BARB: I know, but...

SAMMI: “Scholars” don’t tell actors how to act!

BARB: Of course not, I...

SAMMI: Good! Go! I need to rehearse! Well? What are you waiting for? Go!

BARB: Yes, sir, I mean yes, Sammi, I mean yes, Prospero, sorry: yes, Prospera... (*Scared, drops her binder and exits left.*)

SAMMI: Idiot! Now, where was I? Ah, yes, Prospera, on stage, causing the shipwreck! (*Starts to dance about the stage but stubs her toe and falls.*) Ouch! Again? You’re kidding me! Unbelievable! (*Notices BARB’S binder and calls off left.*) Hey, Barb, you left your... (*In pain, she crawls over to the binder.*) Ow. Ow. Ow. (*Reads the title.*) “Introductory Notes on a High School Production of Shakespeare’s “The Tempest: The Manifestations of Prospera’s Power.” (*Intrigued.*) Prospera’s power? Talk to me. (*Reads and quickly becomes engrossed in the text. She also massages her toe.*)

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***GHOST LIGHT II:
BREAKING THE FOURTH WALL***

by Greg Cummings

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