

WHITE ELEPHANT

A TEN MINUTE MONOLOGUE

By Jerry Rabushka

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CAST: one male or female

(Our speaker is looking back over an amusingly unpleasant incident during a school play.)

The truth of the matter is, I forgot it. ***(making excuses)*** Well it was silly, ill timed, badly written, and besides that, the leading lady had just run off the stage with an ***(with restrained glee)*** unsightly and revealing rip in her costume... ***(proud of this, yet almost ashamed to admit it)*** a rip that I'd discreetly chopped there with a scissors only moments before.

She didn't deserve the part. She only got it because she ***(with a wink)*** "secretly" served up a poisonous artichoke dip in her cooking class – a dip which offended the queen, the princess, and at least three ladies in waiting. Oh, it was a royalty play. You know, kings, queens, jacks, tens, nines, all the way down to the twos. We all had to do English accents – not that we all could, but the director demanded authenticity. The prince of England couldn't even speak his own language.

My monologue came after the queen's dramatic exit – all the more dramatic by that tear in her costume. So unfortunate, but she'd "inadvertently" insulted me during intermission. My acting, my reacting, my cue pickup, my characterization, even my mother! That was the longest intermission I'd ever endured. Actually, she insulted everyone. Whoever she hadn't put in the hospital with the artichoke dip, she accused of ruining her acting debut.

I don't know what she thought she was doing, but it wasn't acting, and it certainly wasn't English history. But I had *the monologue*. The monologue where I got to ruminate on the ill temper of the queen: a woman who had the fortitude to rule a nation but couldn't stomach the fact that someone had taken a cantaloupe sized slice out of her costume in secret revenge.

So there I am, in front of everyone, my chance – my duty! to make a bad playwright look good through an (grand) exceptional delivery of a ***(disgusted)*** really moldy poetic tome. And my memory just went south. Well I remember it now. Now... I'll *never* forget it. Like an elephant. A big white elephant. I have no use for it, but I find myself feeding it incessantly. I say it in the shower. On the bus on the way to school. At

the grocery store. The pastor overheard me and accidentally used it as a sermon.

Here, take a listen. **(begins to recite, and goes into a British accent throughout the section in quotes)** "Oh dear, I seem to have forgotten. Something having to do with the queen. If she finds out I'm the one who cut her dress, she'll have me beheaded. Actually, she was always beheading someone. Whenever she forgot her lines, she simply beheaded the person standing next to her. It was a large cast in act one, but by act two had dwindled shockingly."

Maybe you've never got up on stage and forgotten your lines. Every second is like an hour. It was maybe five seconds, maybe ten. I think by then I could have learned calculus. It just wasn't there. But after all, I'd done my job for the evening. I'd practically dethroned the queen. **(in the accent)** "Oh, she's in a bit of a foul temper, don't you think?"

But she saved me, because she came stomping in and shouted "off with your head!" and I was dragged offstage by one of the only ladies in waiting who hadn't spent the week recovering from artichoke dip. This particular cranial removal wasn't very good policy on the part of the queen, since I had several lines later in the show, including the ones which would save her life. Needless to say, my head was restored within ten minutes, and I went on as if nothing had happened. **(with an evil laugh)** "Think twice, your majesty," I shouted. "You're going to need this head in scene 16".

The queen was outraged, head or no. **(as the QUEEN)** "I want to know who did it!"

"Who did what?" I asked, as innocent as my beheaded character.

"I want to know who snipped out part of my dress the night I had to go to the ball!"

"The ball, your majesty?"

(as the QUEEN) "I can't very well go to a rave," said her royal highness, "it's the blasted 16th Century."

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