

NICK

Shhhh... I've, uh... hit a little setback with the play. But - if you give me another week - I'll name a character after you.

SHYLOCK

Too late. Shakespeare already promised that. I can see it now.
(painting the name in the air)
"Shylock. A really nice guy." Hey! Here's a better idea. Cut me in as an investor in your play and I'll cancel your debt.

NICK

You're not a patron, you're a moneylender!

SHYLOCK

I know, cause that's the only job the queen will let me do!

(then)

And I hate it. I-hate-it, I-hate-it, I-hate-it! But what I love - is the theater. I love the sights, the smells, the roar of the crowd, the smell of the fruits as it hits the actors! I LOVE IT, I TELL YA!

(shaking NICK)

I-love-it I-love-it I-love-it!!

Acting
side

NICK

Wow, I had no idea. But I can't, it's illegal. If I let you invest, we'd both be hanged in front of an angry mob.

Nick
Bea

SHYLOCK

At least you'd finally have an audience. Take the weekend. Mull it over. Because on Monday, your interest doubles.

Nigel

(SHYLOCK exits. NIGEL is now at the table eating from a bowl. BEA is at the cast iron kettle over the fire. NICK crosses to them.)

23-25

NICK

Hello, darling. How was your day?

BEA

Interesting. I went to the stocks and watched the mob throw cabbages at the criminals.

NICK

Why? You hate all that stuff.

BEA

I know, it was awful.

(handing him a bowl)

Boiled cabbage?

SHYLOCK
e

NICK

Ah. I see.

NIGEL

I think it's delicious.

BEA

Aw, thanks Nige. There would've been meat, but the landlord came by demanding the rent – took our last shilling right out of my hand. Then I was gonna surprise you with some mutton – but sheep are fast.

NICK

Wait, wh— you chased a SHEEP? Alright, that's it.

(He pushes away from the table and heads for a wooden lockbox on the mantle.)

BEA

What are you doing?

NICK

I'm just...

(He grabs the money box. She quickly takes it away.)

BEA

No! We've been through this, we do not touch the money box!

(She puts it back.)

NICK

Come on, Bea... we shouldn't have to live like this. You deserve better.

BEA

And so do you – we all do, and that's what we're saving for. A simple cottage in the country, for all of us. You, me, a couple of kids... a room for Nigel and maybe his wife one day...

NIGEL

(embarrassed)

Oh, stop it.

BEA

That's why I was thinking – I should get a job.

NICK

What? No, if you get a job, that will just make me feel like a failure. None of the other writers' wives have jobs.

BEA

Well, they should. This is the nineties! We've got a woman on the throne, and by the year 1600, women will be completely equal to men. Ooh! I just thought of the perfect job for me. I could be in your play!

NICK

What? You can't act.

(BEA cries.)

Oh I'm sorry.

BEA

(quickly stops crying)

Gotcha. See, I can act.

NICK

You know it's illegal to put women onstage.

NIGEL

And anyway, our play's been cancelled.

BEA

What?

NICK

Not cancelled, Nige. I mean, yes, we are no longer doing *Richard the 2nd* but only because we've come up with... a better idea!

BEA

Oooh, what is it?

NICK

Well, we've had the idea that - we need an idea.

BEA

Then let me help you! I'll go out and earn some money and that'll take the pressure off you guys.

end

NICK

Bea, listen...

(#6 - RIGHT HAND MAN begins.)

Scene 5

Acting Side

Nick, Nigel, Portia,
Brother Jeremiah

48-49

(NIGEL)
Sorry... I wasn't looking where I was...

PORTIA

No, that was my fault, I had my head in the—

(#11 – PORTIA AND NIGEL MEET begins. Their eyes meet. And it is love at first sight. PORTIA averts her eyes, then sees the page she's holding. She reads it, looks up – in awe.)

Is this a poem?

NIGEL

Uh-huh.

PORTIA

Are you... a poet?

NIGEL

Uh-huh.

PORTIA

I love poetry. And the way poets use lyrical language to express the beauty of life.

NIGEL

Uh-huh.

(They stare into each other's eyes.)

BROTHER JEREMIAH

Portia! Come away from that heathen at once!

(She snaps out of it as her father, BROTHER JEREMIAH, a Puritan, pulls her away. NICK enters with a lute strapped over his shoulder.)

NICK

Nigel! There you are. Big news.

NIGEL

Me, too. I think I'm in love.

(NIGEL points to PORTIA – who is standing next to BROTHER JEREMIAH.)

NICK

With a Puritan!? Are you mad?? DO YOU KNOW WHO HER FATHER IS??

(BROTHER JEREMIAH stands flanked by PORTIA and OTHER PURITANS as he preaches like a crazed street evangelist.)

BROTHER JEREMIAH

Brethren, I say unto thee... the theaters are a scourge upon our land! They are vile cesspits! Dens of iniquity! Sewers of the soul!

NICK

(to NIGEL)

Wow. You really want that guy giving a speech at your wedding reception?

BROTHER JEREMIAH

(approaching NICK and NIGEL)

Let not thy sacred soul be poisoned by the playwrights and poets whose dark invention diverts simple minds from the one true book!

(Exiting, he takes PORTIA by the arm. She throws NIGEL one last glance before she exits.)

NICK

Forget about her. It'll never work. Now listen. You know the big idea we're looking for? Well, I've got it. We'll do – A MUSICAL!

NIGEL

A what?

NICK

A musical. It's a play with songs – but the songs advance the plot as they seamlessly segue from dialogue into singing.

(NIGEL thinks about it for a beat.)

NIGEL

That... is... the most... amazing idea. How better to express the inner longings of the human soul than with music? And you're always writing songs on your lute.

NICK

And all your poems? There's your lyrics!

NIGEL

It's perfect for us! How did you come up with it?

NICK

(quickly diverting question)

That's – not important. We just need to figure out what it's about. Something big, epic, world-changing.

(suddenly hit with an idea)

I've got it!

(#12 – THE BLACK DEATH begins.)

NICK

Nigel, please. I need you, now more than ever. I've got to go find us a new backer and that means you need to come up with a new idea.

(NICK exits in a huff.)

55-56

NIGEL

start

Yes, you can. Yes, you can.

(He sits, tries to write.)

Uggggh, no you can't.

(He stands to leave and is stopped by A WOMAN IN A CLOAK (PORTIA).)

Oh. Good day, mistress.

PORTIA

"Good days were those when lit with love, till dusk of death did herald th'eternal night."

NIGEL

Hey - I wrote that.

(The WOMAN IN A CLOAK turns and lowers her hood, revealing herself to be PORTIA.)

PORTIA

Yes, I know.

(holding up a page)

I accidentally took this after our first encounter. Your sonnet. It's - perfection.

NIGEL

Really? You thought it was... good?

PORTIA

It... spoke to my soul.

(PORTIA turns away - embarrassed.)

Forgive me. Poetry is forbidden in my house, especially poems of earthly love.

(melodramatically; to the heavens)

OH, IS THERE NO PITY IN THE CLOUDS THAT SEES INTO THE BOTTOM OF MY GRIEF?!

NIGEL

Romeo and Juliet, act 3, scene 5.

PORTIA

You've seen it?

NIGEL

Six times. And you?

PORTIA

Eight! If my father knew, he would disown me.

NIGEL

My brother, too.

PORTIA

I adore Shakespeare.

NIGEL

Me, too! I've got a *Comedy of Errors*, first edition.

PORTIA

I've got "Sonnet Number 1." Signed!

NIGEL

Wow!

PORTIA

I know! Heh-heh...

NIGEL

Heh-heh... that's awesome...

(They giggle together – a pause.)

PORTIA

I think you're his equal – if not better.

NIGEL

What??? No way.

PORTIA

Oh yes. Your sonnet has Shakespearean sophistication mixed with the complexity of Daniel Webster and the sensitivity of Samuel Daniel.

(#14 – I LOVE THE WAY begins.)

Scene 10

93-94

Acting Side

- Shakespeare

- Valet

(NICK:)



Yeah___ Nick Bot-tom's gon-na be on top!

(ENSEMBLE:)



Yeah___ Nick Bot-tom's gon-na be on top!

(Transition to... #22 - TO SHAKESPEARE'S STUDY begins.)

SCENE 10: SHAKESPEARE'S STUDY

(SHAKESPEARE sits at his desk, trying to write...)

SHAKESPEARE

(saying what he's writing...)

"Shall I compare thee to... a horse?" No. A really nice building? No! It has to be wonderful and poetic, something everyone loves. Oh, I know! "Shall I compare thee - to me?" Ha-ha-ha-ha. No, that's terrible.

(crumpling paper)

Uggh! It's hard to be the Bard!

(pacing)

I know writing made me famous - but being famous is just so much more fun!

(His VALET enters.)

VALET

Sir.

SHAKESPEARE

What!? What do you want!? Why are you here?!

(SHAKESPEARE turns; next to his VALET is the EYEPATCH MAN.)

VALET

You asked for information on what Nicholas Bottom is writing. Our spy is here with news.

SHAKESPEARE

Oh. So I did. Speak, man. What news?

(EYEPATCH MAN extends a hand. SHAKESPEARE puts a shilling in it.)

EYEPATCH MAN

I saw Nick Bottom, I did. He paid a soothsayer to foresee what Shakespeare's greatest play would be.

SHAKESPEARE

That sneaky little thief! Why doesn't he get his own idea!?

VALET

Because... writing is hard?

SHAKESPEARE

Oh. Right. It is, isn't it?

(SHAKESPEARE grabs a coat, hat, and fake beard.)

Well, nice try, Nick Bottom. But I think Shakespeare needs to find out what Shakespeare's biggest hit will be.

(#23 – HARD TO BE THE BARD (PLAYOFF) begins. SHAKESPEARE exits.)

end

SCENE 11: THE THEATRE

(NICK is alone with NOSTRADAMUS, furiously sifting through his various sheets of parchment.)

NICK

Okay, so just to make sure I've got this all straight, we've got a prince... eating a danish... and he's visited by the ghost of his dead father?

NOSTRADAMUS

Not a ghost. The phantom! He's the former king who was murdered by the prince's uncle... and the uncle's name is... Scar.

NICK

Scar.

(writing that down)

And he murdered the king. And the prince is in love, but she goes mad you say?

NOSTRADAMUS

Yes! And – how do you solve a problem like Ophelia?

Acting Side, Scene 11, 94-95

SHAKESPEARE

-Nick Oh. So I did. Speak, man. What news?

-Nostradamus (*EYEPATCH MAN extends a hand. SHAKESPEARE puts a shilling in it.*)

-Shylock

EYEPATCH MAN

I saw Nick Bottom, I did. He paid a soothsayer to foresee what Shakespeare's greatest play would be.

SHAKESPEARE

That sneaky little thief! Why doesn't he get his own ideal?

VALET

Because... writing is hard?

SHAKESPEARE

Oh. Right. It is, isn't it?

(*SHAKESPEARE grabs a coat, hat, and fake beard.*)

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(#23 - HARD TO BE THE BARD (PLAYOFF) begins.
SHAKESPEARE exits.)

Start

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NICK

Scar.

(*writing that down*)

And he murdered the king. And the prince is in love, but she goes mad you say?

NOSTRADAMUS

Yes! And - how do you solve a problem like Ophelia?

(NOSTRADAMUS)

(fingers to temples, squinting)

The prince says, "Get thee to a nunnery!" And then the nuns hide her and all of the singing children – from a giant man-eating houseplant!

NICK

Really?

NOSTRADAMUS

I may be a little fuzzy on the ending.

(The TROUPE enters, looking confused and bewildered as they review script pages.)

NICK

Oh, they're back.

(pulls NOSTRADAMUS aside)

Okay, remember – stay over here and don't say anything.

(SHYLOCK enters.)

SHYLOCK

Ahhhh, the theater! I love it, I love it, I love it!

NICK

Shylock! Just in time! Have a seat, we're just about to start.

SHYLOCK

I love it!

NICK

You haven't seen it yet.

SHYLOCK

I know, but I just love being here.

NICK

Okay, everyone, let's take it from the top of the song.

(#24 – IT'S EGGS begins.)

Acting Side

99-100

- Nigel
- Portia
has

. I come seeking

g a work that is...

1 omelette.

ne Bottom

ember - Toby

. NICK notices

Scene 12

(NICK)

Where are you going? We have a whole second act to sort out.

NIGEL

I... need to... explore some other ideas.

NICK

Oh, I get it. You want to go see her, don't you? Well, that's not gonna happen.

(NIGEL exits.)

Nigel... get back h— Uggggh...

(#25 - PORTIA INCIDENTAL begins.)

SCENE 12: UNDER LONDON BRIDGE

Start

(Underneath London Bridge, NIGEL enters. PORTIA emerges from hiding.)

NIGEL

Portia!

(They embrace.)

PORTIA

Oh, Nigel! You made it! I had to climb out the window, but I don't think anyone saw me...

(NIGEL lays his coat on the ground.)

NIGEL

Is here okay?

(She nods, sits. NIGEL pulls out a parchment and reads.)

"Ode to Portia" - by Nigel Bottom.

(Overcome by chronic shyness, he mumbles inaudibly into his lapel.)

Like stars and sun together never seen, yet heaven made us one
our flames to shine...

PORTIA

Speak up a little...

NIGEL

(barely audible; can't make eye contact)

Through night and day, no dusk or dawn between, and none
could dim our light nor love divine.

PORTIA

Let me help you...

(She gets up and reads with him. He gets more confident and reads aloud with her.)

NIGEL, PORTIA

And to the stars will fly the elusive dove; to heaven's gate with my eternal love!

(Their eyes meet on the last phrase.)

PORTIA

It's beautiful. This is what you should be writing, words that feel true to you.

NIGEL

You mean instead of *Omelette*? I know. That just doesn't feel right...

PORTIA

Then don't write it. Write from your heart. It will move others as it has moved me.

NIGEL

Will it move your father? Change his mind? He doesn't approve of us.

PORTIA

Neither does your brother. Oooh! Does that make us star-crossed??

(NIGEL and PORTIA gasp – then giggle.)

NIGEL

Wait, that's not a good thing. We both know how that story ends – with me drinking poison and you with a dagger in your heart.

(#26 – WE SEE THE LIGHT begins.)

Acting

Side, scene 12, 112-114

(#27 - WE SEE THE LIGHT (PLAYOFF) begins.)

-Nigel

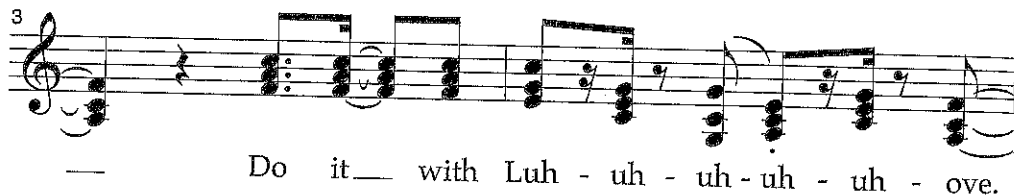
-Portia

-Brother Jeremiah

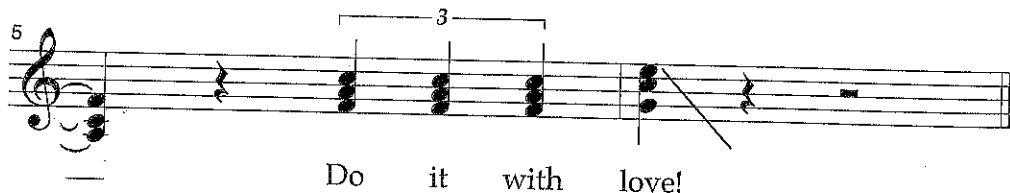
WE SEE THE LIGHT (PLAYOFF)

70s Pop

PURITANS:
(dancing offstage)



Poco Rit.



Start

(NIGEL and PORTIA are left onstage.)

NIGEL

You really think that could happen?

PORTIA

Yes. Once my father sees your heart is true, he will love you as much as I do.

(BROTHER JEREMIAH enters with a couple of PURITANS.)

BROTHER JEREMIAH

You dare defy me, daughter of Eve!?

PORTIA

Please, Father...

begins.)

GHT



e will love you as

f PURITANS.)

BROTHER JEREMIAH

You bid me grant you leave so you could pray forgiveness in church, and instead you slither off here?

PORTIA

(to NIGEL)
Read it. Read your poem.

(NIGEL steps forward to read.)

NIGEL

"If love is a sic..."

BROTHER JEREMIAH

SILENCE!

NIGEL

Okay.

BROTHER JEREMIAH

You will tempt my daughter no more. She will be locked in the church tower, and there she will stay until her exile to our brethren in Scotland.

PORTIA

NO!...

(The PURITANS drag her away.)

NIGEL

Portia!

PORTIA

Write what you feel, Nigel.

NIGEL

I will! I promise!

PORTIA

I love you!

NIGEL

And I l—

(BROTHER JEREMIAH stops him.)

BROTHER JEREMIAH

I am warning you, boy! Leave her be – or you will pay... dearly.

(BROTHER JEREMIAH leaves. NIGEL is left alone, panicking.)

end

Portia!!!

NIGEL

(#28 -- NIGEL'S THEME begins.)

NIGEL'S THEME

(NIGEL:)



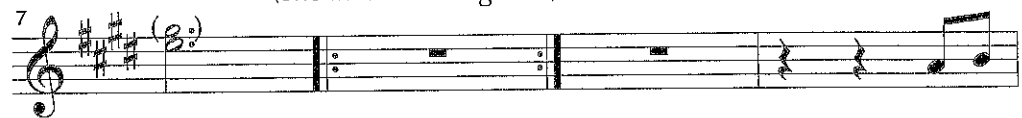
If my pen be my one and my

6 Slow Waltz



on - ly com - pa - nion Let it speak for my

(sits at his writing desk) Rit.



soul

Let it

Rit. 2



speak for my soul.

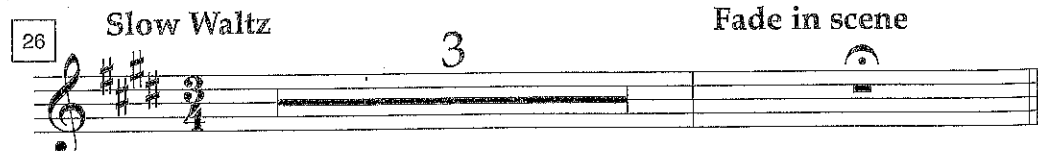
(He takes out a quill, starts writing.)

Relaxed

Rit.



(As he writes, the theater opens and the TROUPE and SHAKESPEARE enter, holding script pages in front of their faces.)



NICK

You hear that, guys!? We have a HIT! So let's give the audience what they're hungry for. OMELETTE THE MUSICAL! - Bea
- Nigel

(#30 - TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE (PLAYOFF))
begins. They cheer and exit as we transition to...

SCENE 14: A LONDON STREET

(BEA enters with a basket of food as NIGEL enters from the opposite side. She sees him.)

BEA

Nigel. I was just bringing you guys some lunch. How's the show going?

NIGEL

Um... you'd have to ask Nick.

(BEA instantly senses something's wrong. She motions for him to sit on a nearby bench.)

BEA

Sit. Talk to me. What's wrong?

NIGEL

We just had a big fight. He said he was carrying me. I'm thinking maybe we shouldn't work together anymore.

BEA

Uh-huh. Do you know the poem "Love is a Boatload of Work?"

NIGEL

Um... no?

BEA

That's because the poets never write about what love is really like. Try being married for ten years, it's not all summer's days and sweet-smelling roses. It's more like "Shall I compare thee to an old dog's breath?"

(They laugh.)

Look, I'll admit I've never seen him like this. He's under a lot of pressure and doing some really stupid things like taking all our savings from the money box...

NIGEL

What??

BEA

Oh yeah. Still trying to figure out how that love poem is going to end. But you know he can't do this without you. Maybe you need to carry him for a bit.

NIGEL

Okay. I will.

BEA

Great. I can't wait to see what you two come up with. I'm sure you'll give 'em a show they'll never forget.

end

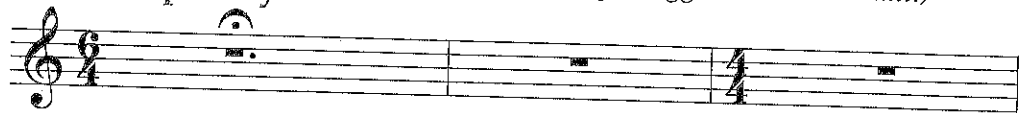
SCENE 15: ON STAGE AT THE THEATRE

(#31 – SOMETHING ROTTEN begins.)

SOMETHING ROTTEN

(The TROUPE is in the banquet room. NIGEL enters, holding an egg like Yorick's skull.)

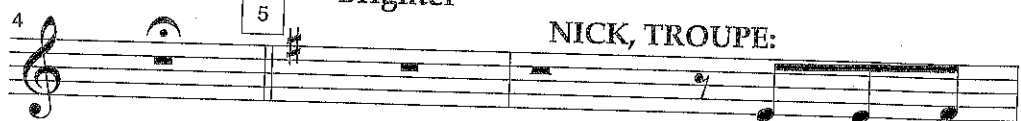
Triumphantly



NICK: (in the clear)

Alas, poor yolk,
I know thee well.

Brighter



NICK, TROUPE:

There's some-thing



rot - ten.

There's some-thing rot - ten.

You can



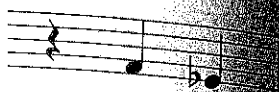
smell it, you can tell it's some-thing rot-ten.

Now the

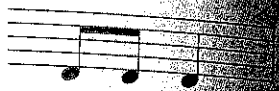
Shakespeare, Nick, Nigel, Peter Quince,
Robin, Nostradamus

Acting Side
Scene 15
131-132

PART 1:

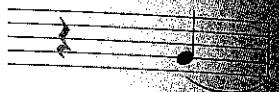


It was



yel-low and

PART 2:

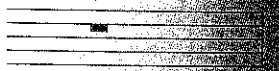


Ah

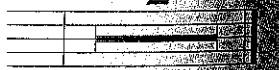
ALL:



make an



2



SHAKESPEARE

(as Toby)

I have a question.

(NICK is thrown by the unscripted interruption.)

NICK

Er, fair Uncle Scar? Why doth thou speakest when thou shouldn't... speakest?

SHAKESPEARE

Because I want to know – how canst thou make an omelette... when one of the eggs be rotten?

(sniffing around, gasping)

Ay, there's the rub! The rotten one – is you!

NICK

Toby?

SHAKESPEARE

Or not Toby – that is the question.

(He removes his beard and wig, revealing his true identity.)

NIGEL

Will?

PETER QUINCE

Shakespeare?

SHAKESPEARE

And you said I was a bad actor.

NICK

You little snake.

NIGEL

Nick, what's going on?

SHAKESPEARE

(points to NOSTRADAMUS)

That woman is a soothsayer. And she was hired by...

(points to NICK)

... this man, who paid her to look into the future and steal my greatest idea.

ROBIN

Nick? Is this true?

NICK

Guys, I can expl—

(The TROUPE, disappointed, walks away. NICK follows them, but they're gone. Then he turns to see NIGEL staring in disbelief.)

NIGEL

You lied to me?

NICK

You don't understand...

NIGEL

No. I don't.

(NIGEL leaves. NICK bows his head. SHAKESPEARE steps up.)

SHAKESPEARE

(to balcony)

Yeah, that just happened. Exit Shakespeare!

(SHAKESPEARE exits. NICK is left alone with NOSTRADAMUS.)

NICK

I have failed... in every way.

NOSTRADAMUS

I could have told you this would happen, but you wouldn't have listened.

NICK

No, you did tell me. You said there would be a great price. And now, I have to pay it.

(#33 – INTO THE COURTROOM begins.)

SCENE 16: COURTROOM

(NOSTRADAMUS takes her seat on the bench beside SHYLOCK and NIGEL. NIGEL turns his back on NICK. The GALLERY is in an uproar. The MASTER OF THE JUSTICE bangs his gavel as BROTHER JEREMIAH steps forward.)

MASTER OF THE JUSTICE

Order! Silence in the court!