

Fool's Gold

a play in 2 Acts

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Cast

PROFESSOR SANBERG: creative writing professor at an unnamed University
SALLY: a contemporary young American woman, at first an aspiring playwright; then a diasporan lost in a desert
EARL: an older African-American man, fellow student of Sally's; later a diasporan lost in the same desert (doubled by POWELL)
EMILIA: wife of Iago in OTHELLO she is here sharp-tongued, hot and confrontational toward the FOOL. At times she becomes outraged.
FOOL: a transsexual woman, who, besides playing with wit, is also the play's director from on stage. (played by a woman or a trans-sexual)
HORATIO: friend and close associate of Hamlet.
FORTINBRAS: English emissary (played by KENT)
AMBASSADOR: English AMBASSADOR (played by GLOUCESTER)
GLOUCESTER: an Earl and loyal supporter of King Lear
POWELL: U.S. General and former cabinet member Colin POWELL.
KENT: Earl of Kent and chief advisor to King Lear
Lear's FOOL: (played by the first FOOL).
PRESIDENT OBAMA : (played by Powell actor wearing a mask) .
JANET NAPOLITANO: (played by Emilia actor)
SAM: a contemporary young American man lost in the same desert (doubled by PROFESSOR)
OTHELLO: acclaimed Venetian general, a Moor (played by POWELL, no one else may play the role); **he is POWELL**, not a distinct character despite ending as OTHELLO from Shakespeare.
LODOVICO: (from Othello, played by HORATIO)

8 actors

Act I, Sc I

(Classroom. Sally, Earl and a few other cast members are seated before the teacher)

Professor Sanberg (hereafter as “Professor”)

Welcome. If you signed up for the seminar course called original Shakespeare, you’re in the right place. If you signed up for “The Tragedies of William Shakespeare” you’ll need to wander down the hall to room 317. *(Someone gets up and walks out)*. My course title needs a brief explanation. The word “original” doesn’t refer to originality in Shakespeare but to this course. *(beat)* Would someone in the back turn on that fan; it’s rather stuffy in here today. *(A fan is activated.)*

Sally *(raises her hand)*

Professor

Question already? I didn’t say anything yet. But sure, what’s your question?

Sally

My understanding was....I mean the class was listed as a creative writing course. Is that wrong?

Professor

No, No. You’re absolutely right; we’re about play writing. I’m getting to that, just let me go on, please.

Sally

Oh, sorry.

Professor

Questions are always good. Sure, any time, any time at all. But as I was saying “original” means that we (you all) are going to create original plays. You’ll base your work on one or more of Shakespeare’s works. It doesn’t matter if you choose tragedy, comedy, history, or problem plays as your basis. You can even mix them up, use one or several plays. You can steal plots and characters at your fancy, you can reinforce a particular interpretation of Shakespeare you’ve read about or invent your own. You can bolster a theme in his plays or invent your own. The bottom line is you will be graded on originality, coherence, and dramatic vision. Oh, before I forget, the one constant in all these works is the fool. You have to use a fool as an important character....*(beat)*.... Questions so far?

Earl:

Professor, when will we begin our drafts? And will you give criticism and feedback during the writing?

Professor:

Good questions. Before I answer that, I think it would help me (and all of you as well) if people might identify themselves and their majors when they speak.

Earl:

Sure,... Earl. Major is Ethnic studies, but I've written some plays.

Sally:

I'm Sally. Theater Arts.

Professor:

You can do sketching out when you want, but before we really get to work we'll spend the first 3 weeks reading plays. In class we'll view video excerpts from various Shakespeare companies' productions. We'll read 20 plays, 7 plays a week, several from each genre. *loudly from someone in the audience: "Ouch."* Well, it is what it is. People who don't think they can do that can drop the course or struggle along. Oh, by the way, if you're taking the course please sign in before you leave. Anyway, after we read and discuss 20 plays, we'll have a synthetic discussion with a guest expert. She'll give her views on Willy's philosophy, political outlook, religion, his role as head of his own company, relationship to royalty and so forth. Then on to your writing. Each week thereafter one of you will volunteer to discuss briefly what you are working on conceptually, present a scene, and you can try and pin them down. Beginning week 8 you'll turn in draft material for my review and we'll have individual criticism conferences. Some highlights from the conferences will show up in class discussions. For the last 2 weeks, after you turn in your final drafts, I'll choose 5 plays that you'll hear read aloud by acting majors I've recruited. I've put this all down in a brief syllabus with more details that you can pick up on your way out.

Lights

End of Scene 1

Scene 2

Same classroom Sally stands before the class

Sally:

So I'm trying to use the Fool as a play convener—a combination director and actor who is pulling together a play co-mingling Shakespeare tragedies as only a wise-ass fool would do. Everything is mixed up and confusing. I mean, the locations aren't even clear, but it crosses time barriers and the Shakespeare characters--- sometimes they spout Shakespeare while other times they talk outside their plays to each other.

Out of nowhere the Fool wanders on-stage and does a silly dance (with soft musical background around the professor as Sally speaks). They don't notice the Fool. The Fool then climbs a suddenly appearing rope ladder and, ascending high above the stage, watches silently, then bows to the audience as Sally finishes at the end of the scene, before disappearing into the eves.

And like in Hamlet, with the Mousetrap, there is another brief play within the play that's about loss, migration and diaspora-- the huge waves of migrants fleeing wars and social disasters that are a big part of our world today; and some other stuff I won't go into now.

Earl:

But can a play work successfully Sally if it confuses and disorients the audience?

Professor:

That's my question as well, Earl. I haven't conferenced with Sally yet, but her approach sounds like a major challenge for both her and her audience. I'm anxious to learn how you try to overcome what you call the "confusion." Sounds complicated, possibly overwhelming.

Sally:

Well, Earl, I'm not **trying** to confuse the audience, but they'll have to do some mental work to follow what's what. I hope I won't disorient them either, but time and timing are issues.

End of Scene 2

Scene 3

Setting: professors office: Sally in stuffed easy chair, Prof at desk.

Professor:

A woman Fool, or transsexual, seems fine, as a critique of the Elizabethan times, but the Shakespeare characters and quotes are hard for even me to follow. How is the audience to know which characters are from which plays and which speeches are from those plays and which are your original work? Assuming you want them to know, that is. And how can you bring your characters to life if they are saddled with quotes.

Sally:

I'll put some of the real Shakespeare stuff—like which characters are from which plays, which speeches are from the Shakespeare tragedies-- in the stage bill, for people to read in advance. We'd promote the play as one where people had to do that advance reading of the playbill to follow the action successfully. It wouldn't be the first time, I think. And, I guess, as far as the talking across different plays by Shakespeare characters I'm hoping to make that clear by bringing the characters themselves to life. As far as confusing my lines with Will's? Well no love's lost in that so long as the audience can follow the plot.

Professor: *(looks her pointedly in the eyes)*

Sally, of course it's your play. I'm not here to tell you that you can't invent what you want to invent. But I'm choosing your play as one to be read so we'll see if the class and the actors can make sense out of it. Your grade will depend substantially on how the work is received. Is that ok with you?

Sally

Hmmm. *(beat)* I don't know. That's a challenge. Seems like a dare or a bet. If my play doesn't work for the audience I could get a poor grade? Maybe fail the course?

Professor:

No, that's not what I meant. I didn't say a poor grade. If you finish your effort there won't be a poor grade. It's more like whether you get an A or a B with pluses or minuses.

Sally:

Alright, I'll take that risk. But if I get an A will that mean anything as far as getting my play produced.

Professor:

Whoa! Hold on now. I haven't said anything in class about getting plays from this course produced. That's a stretch....

Sally:

Yes, I know that, but I'm asking you anyway--- whether, if you think it's good enough for an A, would you go to bat for getting it produced? *(Professor looks at Sally, a bit unnerved, nods head in disbelief, says nothing and the lights go down)*

End of Scene 3

Scene 4

Setting: pastoral scene; at a cross crossroad, a palace in the distant background.

As lights come up EMILIA and FOOL enter walking/strolling and bantering.

EMILIA:

All the world's a stage and

FOOL:

The better to stage more FOOLS. That it leaves room for us all. But, EMILIA my love, you're speaking from the wrong play. That's from As You Like It..

EMILIA:

Hush there now. Would you not rather play the FOOL than be a serious player?

FOOL:

I know no difference twixt the two. We FOOLS can be found at the heart of Will's tragedies and comedies alike and in all else, for varied thoughts come upon us natural as life itself. Think about it. We're ubiquitous--even when not so tasty we're ubiquitous. I'm not acting when I say so.

EMILIA:

Indeed, a FOOL in march time and tune need not read from a particular play, but just play the FOOL. Tis pleasant enough. But look ye, here comes HORATIO. How now, this confusion fits me like a glove. For have I now been transported to lodge in Hamlet's Denmark with Hamlet's Horatio?...What news HORATIO?

FOOL:

What said I of confusion? Tis not confusion on foot, but Horatio.

HORATIO (*ignoring Fool he takes out a book*):

According to my research, The London Common Council in 1574 asserted thusly (and I quote): "Sundry great disorders and inconveniences have been found to ensue to this city by the inordinate haunting of great multitudes of people, specially youth, to plays, interludes, and shows, namely occasions of frays and quarrels, evil practices of inconstancy in great inns **having chambers and secret places adjourning** to their open stages and galleries." You hear that, "secret places", that means hanky panky, doesn't it?

FOOL:

(aside) I'll bring this talker low with a barrage of questions. *(to HORATIO)*: These are none of your lines from Hamlet, HORATIO. How do you happen to come to London from Denmark? From what do you quote? And do you repudiate your most valued and vivid lines from Hamlet, or deny even Hamlet his rightful place in this theater? You his best friend? What has become you, good HORATIO? I can't tell you from Claudius, the way you've gone beyond the lines here like some editor. *(FOOL sighs out of breath)*.

HORATIO:

What? I deny nothing. My lines are my own for now. And to compare me with Claudius? Are you not the FOOL? I am both of Hamlet and not.

FOOL:

Indeed, tis true I am the FOOL. But still, actually, your words do strike a note--these disorders, the rowdiness persists even til today—though what day it may be I canst not say--- causing social disorder against the offices and officers of State--occupations, preoccupations, wellsprings of rebellion, summers of revolt, springs of autumn and autumns of springs. Blaggards with their common lives pretending to matter. Never such a muss as now before us. We theatrical FOOLS had best not abide the fools who would confuse commotion and rebellion for good fun and pithy word plays. The rabble and their rabbling. How they refuse to play their commonplace roles in due respect to custom, and instead challenge the nobility of Kings; et cetera. Tis this not so?

EMILIA:

(some stuffed bodies—dummies or manikins—are either dragged, thrown or dropped onto stage [discretion on how serious or comedic to make this appear is to the director] up right and EMILIA gestures toward them)

Oh my. Damn the candle that shines too bright. Death and mangled bodies everywhere, the blood of it all. No matter the story, the trajectory, the moral, these tragedies.... always drowned in bloody murder while your antics *(gestures toward the FOOL)* resolve to false mirth and nonsense as if to deny the bloody deeds. *(dejected)* If the trajectory is so narrowly confined, then why bother with any of it? *(Toward Horatio)*: What care I of these social disorders you bespeak.

FOOL:

Why not bother with it, fair and dark EMILIA? Tis but an entertainment, to my thinking. Disorder seems to be endemic to the nature of human nature, indeed. And so we make mirth on't, tis true. But why not? Better to do what?

(FORTINBRAS and AMBASSADOR enter through the pile of bodies and to loud drums and bugles)

FORTINBRAS: What is this sight? This quarry cries of havoc. O proud death.

AMBASSADOR:

The sight is dismal; And our affairs from England come too late.

EMILIA:

My God. From England. To England. Are we now located in Denmark again?

HORATIO: *(welcoming toward the two men)*

Hail. Tis fair enough you from the Polack wars, and you from England, are here arrived; *(he walks toward the two new arrivals)* but give order that these bodies high on a stage be placed to the view, and let me speak to the yet unknowing world how these things came about. So shall you hear of *(emphasis)* **carnal bloody and unnatural acts**, of accidental judgments, casual slaughter, of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause.

(actor goes out of character and out of the Hamlet script and speaks to audience):

It's what I promised Hamlet, of course. Would you do less for a slain friend, a hero of the people? A victim of his own courage, a contemplative leader not of sheep, but for all humankind?

(FORTINBRAS and AMBASSADOR nod in approval)

FORTINBRAS:

Bear Hamlet's body like a soldier to a high stage captains. For he was likely to have proved most royal. And take away all these other bodies.

(HORATIO, and EMILIA now drag the bodies off stage and Fontinbras and AMBASSADOR leave behind them; HORATIO and EMILIA return).

FOOL:

(to HORATIO) That's to the mark now. Good, good. But beware the philosophical waxing in that speech you performed, for there has been a great fervorish furor against "**unnatural acts**" in certain quarters of late. Church bells peeling have pointed half the way to Rome like a Searchlight's beam. Tis enough to Trump your speech, HORATIO. Are you certain you wouldst mention "**carnal acts**"? Do mark the danger.

EMILIA:

FOOL he is talking of the plot against Hamlet—first the father, then the son, slain... not of sexual violations, rape, debauchery, pedophilia or of calumny in the Roman Church.

FOOL:

Your clarity dear EMILIA rewards me with its veracity and forewarns of my tendency to calamity; yet me thinks your own tragic trajectory could not be confused for Hamlet's. Was it not conjured by your master and husband, Iago, he more recently resurrected as a modern sovereign, that W, who gave even us FOOLs a bad name. Twas it not he, conspiring against your heroic general, caused your own demise? Questions, questions, I cannot stop them. Nor should I? Ha! No, don't answer that. But can't you not stay out of Hamlet's play and stand by for your own story, EMILIA? I do so wish you'd go aside and segregate your tale for the sake of, of, perhaps coherence?

EMILIA:

My dear FOOL. Why impugn my understanding or my loyalty to my part? Be you another woman hater then? Hamlet is dead there (*she gestures to where they took the bodies*). Long live Hamlet. And fuck Iago; he is dead too, God knows where, but the more deservedly so. The W, returning to me as Iago's legacy, is little more than the memory of Iago, the walking dead. I see him as phantasm. And I will go nowhere but right here where I am. Or will you try to uproot me from this mother earth?

FOOL:

No nary the one nor the other do I impugn, but the sum, all of these together. Again I say, you are on the wrong stage; on the wrong page; and in the wrong play. And am I not a woman too? Why would I try to uproot you, then?

EMILIA:

Verily, not without good cause are you called "FOOL" for if all the world's a stage and you a FOOL, I need pay you no attention. Just beware, I shall not yield to the men you play with; and despite appearances all know that women may not play men, nor play as women on these stages. For that tis against the law. Thus you are most likely both a FOOL and a fake to play so.

FOOL:

And you? No need for insult, my lovely fairy queen, for you bare the same burden of tradition. Be you also the fraud, then? My job is to mark out the boundaries here, and to do so with sufficient mirth and folly. I am a FOOL and too the director after all, your ridicule notwithstanding, and so typically FOOLishness is my gambit, if not my cloak. I'll stand by **your** womanishness, even if you won't abide mine. Of that I vow. Fear not.

EMILIA:

I do fear not, but will grant you this, FOOL. I was--when inside that Othello play you mention--unaware of the game in which I became the unwitting agent of my Iago. I damn that conniving imbecile Iago born again yesterday, now but from New England stock, become a prince. How he corrupted the General's love and destroyed us all by implicating my dear Desdemona; inveigling me, unknowing, in the plot. Whereas your Hamlet, I can see with my own two eyes, dear Hamlet was not so blind to such cunning as our Moor was blind, for he knew his master's plot inside and out--the tragedian players' mousetrap the proof on it—bringing all those bloody corpses, inevitable, always, anon.

(corpses are again thrown on the stage)

FOOL:

Oh, I like this rant.

EMILIA:

Oh how Hamlet foresaw it all, even to the GHOST's words.

GHOST: (by POWELL actor)

(from back stage on mic with reverb:). Know thou the serpent that did sting thy father's life now wears his crown? If thou dost ever thy dear father love, revenge his foul and most unnatural murder. *(GHOST moans, then)* Swear it! Swear it!

EMILIA:

You've a good sound man, FOOL. But were mine own corpse and that of sweet Desdemona's for naught? Why must we fall? Was it so necessarily fated. Would that I had slain damned Iago with these two hands--that cunning, paranoid, and resentful cur, his plan might have been upended, none to the worse, all to the better. Yet, some consolation in my gullibility I see. Imagine, had I the broader vision of your Hamlet *(she gestures to HORATIO)* there might have been no tale to tell at-all, the tragedy of OTHELLO having been defeated by my intuitive Emilia moment. So do all things play out in the end, whether we be see-ers or blind men (or women). Poof!!...*(beat)*...

FOOL:

Or perhaps there could still be foreplay?

EMILIA: *(enraged, irate)*

What? What did you say? Such perfidy again. May you rot in hell, But be certain that I will not entertain your base intentions any more than I would have from the Moor, had he so proposed—though obviously he never did and why should he--or from that whip and chain-loving Duke Dick or the Trumpeter himself always sneering at me, through me.

FOOL:

Calm now sweet EMILIA. Do you still take me for a man? I will have your heart. Must I undress before you to prove myself woman? (*FOOL unfurls long hair*).

EMILIA:

Bosh! But to Hamlet again: whether tis nobler in the mind to suffer fortune's slings and arrows..or to take up arms against a sea of troubles, and end them. I'm sure you know it all but here's a different rub. Tis in the first Quarto about Hamlet's so rich inward grasp --going on thusly—though who knows if these be Shakepeare's words. Listen: (*she pulls out, hold up and reads from the first Quarto*) "***But...who'd bear the scorn and flattery of the world, scorned by the right rich, the rich cursed of the poor? The widow being oppressed, the orphan wronged, the taste of hunger or a tyrannt's reign...This conscience (this introspection) doth make cowards of us all.***" (*beat, beat*)....What make you of this, HORATIO?

HORATIO:

Your Hamlet touches my heart, EMILIA.

EMILIA:

Yet of meself, a loyal servant to my lady, seeing her needlessly dead, just there on her bed, smothered by a fierce and unnatural jealousy, I had no need for introspection. I was impelled to action by a simpler moral imperative—**revenge of the betrayal**. My aim was true, yet too late, too miserably late to save the day, so what good the sacrifice, stillborn, so tragically mis-timed. I suspect your Hamlet felt the same, yet his mind was bent toward the future of Denmark even to the near dawning of democracy. Had he that Greek ideal of the demos in mind, dost thou think, Horatio?

HORATIO:

It did seem so to me. But who am I, a mere Horatio, to say.

EMILIA:

I thought so--while my mind was too pregnant to the moment—to speak the tormenting truth was all my compulsion. There was no good timing for that, **good lord**.

HORATIO:

I am no lord, dear woman, but I drift beyond reason; outside my depth, for your words do both enthrall and confound me. I dare not speak of the former Iago or the later W for tis a closed circle then; a dog chasing his tale. (*the FOOL appending a tail to herself dances around gleefully pretending to chase her own tail*). Of this one thing I am certain. Hamlet was no more mad than we here are presently. His mind was sharp and clear. Though his plan was imperfect, he left me as messenger. I did my duty to him and to Denmark....*beat, beat*.... But look yonder. An old man, looking awful and haggard, approaches.

(a blind old man staggers onto stage and, surprisingly speaks first)

GLOUCESTER: *(crotchety)*

And who might thou be, good friend?

HORATIO:

I am HORATIO, left to tell the history of my dear friend Hamlet and our bereft Denmark's betrayal.

GLOUCESTER:

Hamlet, Hamlet... Sounds familiar. Wasn't he the Dane? A king?

HORATIO:

As I say, indeed he was. A great Dane. Son of the King of the same name, his father murdered by the uncle who took up with the queen and usurped the throne then plotted Hamlet's murder to be, here in England, but then not to be.

EMILIA:

Back in England, yet again?

GLOUCESTER:

Yes, it is coming back to me. These King problems are all quite remarkably similar. Well, they're not quite the same matter, I suppose—really the plays do make the difference, and I reckon that details matter—but when you look back away from the details, the damned events, people, history, keep repeating over and over. I'm not resentful at my lot, actually. I respect it deeply—I mean history, in its ever changing retelling. Lessons to learn. But I stuck with my King---Lear that is---though he's been betrayed by his two ambitious daughters. I am what I am and I pay the price—look at these eyes gouged out by the damned usurpers. Infamy, well before the moment of truth. Still I can see clearly now even through rain.

HORATIO:

How now, sir? The seeing blind?

GLOUCESTER:

Yes, a paradox, I know, but loss sharpens the mind.. Life's like that. Now I see in many directions at once, near and far as well—toward the crimes of particularity, yet also toward the commonplaces that lead to the particulars.

FOOL:

Can you refine that for me—some particulars, if you please.

GLOUCESTER:

It took a while to see that almost any man, woman or child can be a king when you get down to the knife, the fork and the dead bodies. Hamlet knew that. And then they all act out the same tale in different ways regardless. Only the doleful particulars change. I don't need to see their angry faces to recognize them. Of course Lear was different in my eyes. My king. My man.

FOOL:

Yes, that's what I mean. Tell us particulars about Lear and you.

GLOUCESTER:

He has a temper, yes, and arrogant, of course, but a particular kind of self-delusion has he, I suppose. He thinks he can keep his cake and eat still—though he gave his power, wealth, property away he imagines himself to still be royally ensconced. To top it all off he trusts the two bad ones, the flatterers, betrays his most cherished, Cordelia.

(The FOOL easily bored and distracted, begins a long slow climb up a rope ladder which again hangs from the eaves and she mimes as she climbs, as if making fun of GLOUCESTER. She will continue the climb as GLOUCESTER speaks until GLOUCESTER says the word "until" (Glouster's second entry below) at which point the FOOL grabs a hanging rope and slides back down to the stage as GLOUCESTER completes his downing of the King).

FOOL: *(from the rope ladder)*

Yes, yes, we know all that. Don't we? *(he gestures to coach the audience, soliciting a response)*. You must not dwell on't.

GLOUCESTER:

Well we all make mistakes. No? Cordelia and KENT saw what was happening. But KENT, ever the loyal advisor, banished, could do little before the die was cast. Inevitability.

FOOL:

Let it be, will you? Tells us else.

GLOUCESTER:

So what's to be done if a King wants to abdicate and ignore guidance? His FOOL was no better at preemption than the others. How could you tell Lear, "beware the Ides of March" because you'll soon be crowing "et tu Brute"? That's another story altogether, but it's still the model for how these things don't work out well. No way a King can see the truth from the inside out when he's always looking down upon it from the outside in...*(he looks and points up at the FOOL in the sky)*.beat...**Until, until**,.... *(he looks up at the FOOL again who now grabs the rope)* he's vengefully beaten down to earth *(FOOL slides down the rope hits the ground with a cymbal crash)* or lately ignored or murdered by almost any royal child or other one close and envious of him or his power. Too late doth loss turn to insight.

(more bodies are dragged, dropped or thrown on stage).

FOOL:

Indeed, the pile grows. But Lear's FOOL was not the fault, as he only plays the honest FOOL.

GLOUCESTER:

As that dear woman here was saying when I wandered in, it always ends up with all these bodies, falling like a hard rain. *(waves his arm in direction of the bodies)*. A blind man can smell the unstanchable blood everywhere. Why does it always have to go that way? And what's her name, did you say?

FOOL:

She's EMILIA, Iago's wife.

EMILIA:

Hold now friends, I see the good general approaching. And hurrah, he is neither in chains, nor suicided yet. Perhaps time still to save my lady; oh grant us a second chance.

POWELL: (*enters with a small dog on leash*)

What ho? Have you, all of you, not heard the decree that gatherings of 3 or more people on street corners (or crossroads) are declared acts of rebellion against the State? What excuses have you to be accumulating in flagrant violation of the decree?

FOOL:

Not excuses, really. We only wanted to witness your fine entry, my good general. You being our greatest soldier. We commend you most highly as slayer of enemies, and for your clever use of awesome shocks and bombs—you who flattened the city of Gomorrah and conquered the Turk in Crete with your own mighty sword. We honor you, sir. Should you deny us the chance to greet you, what hope might we still entertain for peace throughout the empire? To prevent such demoralization, would that you might make an exception of us?

POWELL:

You make a worthy point sir. I suppose that would make you the FOOL here. May I have your name, woman? You'll be rewarded well and honored shortly when I return home and report to the **Dick Duke** or is that **Duke Dick**. I fear I may have contracted honest W's dyslexic confusion in the ordering of such alliterative names.

FOOL:

Sad to say good General, but I have no name to provide you myself. True it is they do call me FOOL. Not that I like that, but FOOL sticks like used chewing gum and I can't get it off my shoe ...*beat*...nor my birth certificate. I've even tried Ready Round-up. It burned holes in the shoe but left the FOOL intact.

POWELL:

Not to worry we'll find you a good name later, sir or madam, if my name be Colon. But first we've to knock out more of the trenchant enemy be he Turk, Eye Rackey, Greek, Yemeni, Russky or Armenian, Serbian or Syrian. Hold the Chinese for later, I can't give up that hot and sour soup. But I can and do attest with great authority that whomever we want to attack has shown an unenviable inclination toward standing in our gun sights and, being in the way, will be awestruck down. They are, after all, craven thieves, sucklings of our weapons who deign to rule over evil empires.

FOOL:

(*aside*) This FOOL must be invited to join the FOOL's Union.

POWELL:

Our fight against the endless tyrannies of time require curfews, and again more curfews. We will not achieve the final conflict, nor rail against the outrageous procession of time if disobedience thus prevails. Get thee thus to a nunnery and shape up, women.—*beat*-- and you men too.... Where in hell'd that come from?

FOOL: *(aside to the audience)*

Hamlet sneaking in again, and he doesn't know it, but, in truth, who doth know if Ophelia kills herself because Hamlet said "get thee to a nunnery" or because the murder of her father—at Hamlet's hand no less--was too much irony to bear? Your guess is as good as mine. Surely Will's heroes can be cruel with their ironies.

POWELL:

Look ye here. I've the maps, charts and intelligence reports that speak to such truths. We'll stand behind them to the last man; they're adjustable, replaceable, and corruptible to meet the needs of most any situation; they're backed by facts, such as good thoughts, good words, good deeds... The fevered conclusions of my reports are by and large incontrovertible ..*(beat)*... Unless you happen to an unpatriotic dissembler like the Sandman we took down... Would any of you be that?

FOOL:

Oh, no, no. Surely not that sir. We're all deeply religionist, appreciative of your kindness, sir General, but if it's all the same, about the name thing, I think I'd prefer to keep my name as is, and let my words stay as they would, coming off the page—you know, to be mouthed by any FOOL at all. I've gotten used to it....
(aside) This FOOL seeks to embroil me in his self-deluded machinations. He takes me for a FOOL well enough though I'm the more foolish, and thus the wiser.

GLOUCESTER:

Have no fear, good sirs, an awakening will come when all mankind will bow down in prayer to the bendedness of human story telling and thence find cause to rebel against falsehoods that lead us to tragic ends, gouged eyes and bloody corpses.

(HORATIO throws up his hands, shakes his head, gestures to all that he's had enough and then, hand to forehead as if with a headache, he starts to leave the stage in exasperation)

FOOL:

What? Incomprehensible. Wait HORATIO. I don't remember anything like that in Lear, or anywhere else. Do either of you?. *(she turns toward HORATIO whose reached the edge of stage up left and then turns back)*. Is that, perhaps, some kind of incoherent rephrasing of a Hamlet reflection, might you know?

HORATIO:

(returning slowly to the group still shaking his head while GLOUCESTER wanders off)
Not to my ear. Just apocalyptic confusion I'd imagine.

EMILIA:

I wouldn't know, FOOL, for my life's bound up in OTHELLO, though I grant that I've some study in Hamlet. But this GLOUCESTER's hashing of words doesn't ring a bell for me. Much insanity on the Heath though if I recall. Might you ask the General? He's in charge of what's allowed, after all? Or at least he always gives a good impression on the role of authorities.

POWELL: *(catching EMILIA's words he starts in again)*

Indeed, I am in charge, five stars worth...beat...more or less. Though it gets kind of -- impermanent's the right word for all things mortal I suppose. Until death do us part. But it's a hard road. Hazardous. For I have to deal with that most honest of men, that most self-aggrandizing of nasty slavish toads, W. Why does everyone keep calling him "the most honest?" I must have called him that a thousand times over. And for what? A bad joke on me is what it was. Well that's another matter. Then he goes and lands on a Carrier, declares phantom victories, flashing V's here and there. You know, with his dyslexia he confuses Ws and Vs and that creates improvisational scenarios we still have to work through in his speech coaching. He never could land one of those Skyhawks on the mark even in the Guard. And so I was the dutiful military leader who had to do the nasty working through. He is the "provisional" man when all is said and done: interesting, curious, absurd, though he be. A pinball wizard is how I would put it. I loved the great man. Still, I admit I haven't read the Lear play so I can't add much to your thinking on this GLOUCESTER fellow, but on W I could go on..and on.

FOOL:

No, please don't.

POWELL:

(goes on anyway as HORATIO and EMILIA exit stage. He falls into an easy chair)

Actually I was too busy, determinedly working my way topward up inside the system; seeking and finding my own role, my level. So I was far too busy to indulge in outside affairs. But you see these stars here on this uniform; they do mean something.

FOOL:

(aside) again he goes on endlessly, the very model of an African Colonel Redl, if you will, or a modern major general if you prefer. *(to POWELL)* most brilliantly done, sir. Most brilliantly. *(FOOL sits on floor at POWELL's feet)*

POWELL: (*pontificating*)

It's a rat race, the meritocracy, but I showed it can be done by a non-albino. You should be proud to have allowed it of me. You know, being Moorish created certain constraints, even if I am the greatest general in this new age of Aquarius. A kind act of beneficence lays the pillows down against future falls (that's a saying I thought of myself. You can use it as a sound bite if you want). (*POWELL gets out of the chair, walks to the stage front, past the FOOL ignoring her and talking now to the audience*).

But you don't want to know about the travails and travesties one had to endure. Of course my folks were from the Islands, not the South nor the North. But along that road as I climbed toward heaven I couldn't appear distracted, so I allowed for no distractions. Focus, focus, keep the goal always in mind; that was my theme; it's one to teach the youngsters. But then, Desdemona weakened my no-distraction pledge. Who could ask for anything more than Desdemona? She wanted me, and in her I had found my beach, until the honest Iago conjured his dirty tricks.

GLOUCESTER:

(*walks from a ways off, emphatically and almost in POWELL's face*)

But you killed her, didn't you? Is there no remorse now? You then killed yourself for it even. And what do you have to say now about how it all turned out? I mean, now that you're put outside the circle, like the rest of us. And with what resulted in Iraq also.

POWELL:

Oh, not. I'm not an outsider like the rest of you appear to be. Othello was exposed for the murder of Desdemona, but after my performance at the UN Citadel, I was placed back on a pedestal and urged to run for President by the --oh I can't remember who. Maybe Dick. Though ambition be what it is, the scene soured me on that idea. And I felt the parallel of the most honest Iago's betrayal to the quick, a bitter sting. The WMDs thing—well that's just business as usual, but that the most honest man I loved had me kill my beloved, it reverberated—if you know what I mean. It did shake my loyalty for a minute. Still, a soldier's a soldier, so I soldier on, but I'm following my own way now.

GLOUCESTER: (*bitterly*)

Yes, we know all that all too well.

POWELL:

By the way, that decree I spoke of is still in effect. Once I leave this stage, if you don't disperse, you're taking your lives into my hands. We can't allow these encampments. Our common immigrant roots matter little more than in some vulgar theatrical sense. Other connections and loyalties are what make the difference. Come to think of it, are you all commoners or do I stand before degraded royals perhaps?

GLOUCESTER:

You mean to say you've learned nothing from 8 years of W and D's betrayals. I mean they trotted you out before the U.N. to say those things with all those fake satellite photos about Iraq and you made a fool of yourself before the world with all that pretense about imminent danger, links to Al Qaeda. It was lingo all over again with W. And look at the consequences.

POWELL:

Oh, I wasn't pretending. I believed every word.

GLOUCESTER:

Isn't that the point? They deceived you?

POWELL:

Not exactly. They deceived themselves mostly. I was an equal partner in their delusion. They wouldn't abuse me, manipulate me, mistreat me in that way, do you think?

GLOUCESTER:

You really believe that? That they saw a Moor as their equal?

POWELL:

Sure. What else is there for a ranking general to believe?

GLOUCESTER:

Well you might think that you were set up to front for lies that killed millions of innocents. Otherwise, how could you live with the guilt of it all?

POWELL:

You just don't understand my position, good man. What was your name again?

GLOUCESTER:

I am the EARL of GLOUCESTER, loyal servant to my King, Lear.

POWELL:

A ranking royal King's man. Ah, good. So you should well understand me. (*the following lines spoken gently, not pompously*) I am the author of Shock and Awe; of how to kill, terrorize, petrify them; to wreak havoc till the living envy the dead. If there's got to be war, might as well do it right. I'm the agent of change, the protector of peace and righteousness. My loyalty to my Duke and the system of laws and order here is unchallenged, unassailable--though allow me to beg your pardon for this out-of-character indecorous self-appraisal. (*more bodies thrown on stage again; this time they are more bloody and there are children too*)

GLOUCESTER:

General, apparently you had little time to read of the travails of my King and myself, but I am struck that perhaps you have also not read your own tale of woe. You might do both, time permitting, now that you are retired.

POWELL:

My own tale? But how can that be? I read OTHELLO to play this part here, but we are all makers of our fortunes and our own life stories off the page—good and bad, for better and for worse. My tale, a bootstrap contemporary story, is not yet full completed, so how might I read it in a book. He who steals my life from me, risks that I might smite him as a thief. And I'm a fair reputed smiter as was OTHELLO.

GLOUCESTER:

By "your own tale", I mean when you were cast by Will as the Moor, as OTHELLO, the great general of the powerful city-state of Venice, not your tale with Bush. Did you pay but scant attention to the Bard whose lines we speak--sometimes?

POWELL:

Of course, I know some Shakespeare. Genius of a man. I have seen some of those other plays as well. I read the OTHELLO conscientiously. But twas that FOOL who casted me on this stage. I am alive but since 1937, born in New York. How can you thus distort history so badly, to say I can find myself in a play written centuries ago just because I read some of the lines? You treat me like an idiot. I know better, or I never would have achieved all that I have achieved and reached the pinnacles I climbed to.

FOOL: (*HORATIO and EMILIA have wondered in. FOOL arises and joins them*)
Not being an admitted FOOL, he treats us not as if a FOOL, for such a FOOL would ne're be so FOOLish in serious times.

EMILIA:

(*to the FOOL*) My God, how might he come to see these connections if he's been so busy studying politics, war history, and conquests?

FOOL:

Yes, that's the point isn't it? All so busy riding the rails and staying on the track. You might think education was the problem in it; how its scoped. Perhaps there's an infirm link here between theory and practice—what some call pragmatics.

EMILIA:

Your mouth is full of wayward empty words, FOOL. Grant you, that you've hit on my problem with your praxis gambit, but the Moor's is of a different sort. He's like GLOUCESTER's King Lear—oblivious. Though Lear's FOOL called LEAR out on't, Lear can't see the forest for the trees; we must do the same for im here? That's hardly a theoretical problem. It's all in that old identity game called "the I and the we."

HORATIO:

Are you saying, EMILIA, the great general is a mental case, like Reagan who lost his mind in the big old ofal office?

(GLOUCESTER now staggers into their circle to interject while POWELL returns to his chair)

GLOUCESTER:

Oh, Regan's just a selfish and ruthless brat, I think. An evil actor and plotter more than actually a mental case. She's a woman of hate; I felt it in those clawing hands at my throat. Little doubt about that.

HORATIO:

Hold sir, I refer to the delusional dementia of the late former President, not to Lear's vicious daughter, Regan. Yet how else would people become evil actors in this world except through the instruction and wily mentorship of others? Lear was progenitor, prototype of the oblivious.

GLOUCESTER:

(chastened) Oh, I see my error in the naming. I am haunted by misperceptions. So sorry, sir. My hearing's not what it used to be. I was of little use to Lear-- or to KENT in the stocks either for that matter. But I think Hamlet chose you well as a friend,
HORATIO.

POWELL:

(arises, strolling over) Ok. Ok. Let's break it up now. I have to get going myself; and you'd all better run along home. The curfew begins in 10 minutes. Don't let the troopers catch you in defiance.

All exit.

End of scene 4

Scene 5 (*minor set changes—or not*)

(Enter GLOUCESTER and KENT, the latter disguised as a peasant, walking but with fake stocks of painted styrofoam around his neck and ankles)

GLOUCESTER: (*from Lear Act II, sc 2*)

I am sorry for thee friend. Tis the Duke of Cornwall's pleasure, whose disposition all the world well know, will not be rubbed nor stopped. I'll entreat for thee.

KENT:

Pray do not sir. I have watched and traveled hard. Some time I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle. A good man's fortune may grow out at heels. Give you good morrow.
(Enter the FOOL)

FOOL:

Ah, is this good fellow the EARL of KENT, though in appearance quite shabby?

GLOUCESTER (*to the FOOL*):

Indeed this is he, in a guise. The Duke's to blame in his stocking. Twill be ill taken.
(KENT lies down and falls fast asleep. The FOOL offers GLOUCESTER a drink and a pair of dark sunglasses).

Listen FOOL. I've earlier conveyed falsely with my story. When Lear did banish KENT for defending Cordelia's honesty, I could not yet see the rightness in it. I played the FOOL awhile. *(wishes he hadn't said that)* Oh, pardon that—but I was foolish...a thoughtless. And more, I was blind to the dishonest cunning of my own beloved bastard son Edmund with his plot against his loyal royal half-brother Edgar, and against me and Lear too. Oh Edgar *(he sobs)* how I wronged you. I was but a lesser Lear reproduction, betraying your love, me mind warped by Edmund's infamy. Tis only just now that the offense upon KENT—sleeping here in the stocks—*(he gently nudges KENT with a toe. It doesn't quite seem a tender gesture)*--roused my indignation and intelligence. That and seeing how Regan and Cornwall cared not to stop Lear from wandering out into a hurricane. So, for defending my King am I blinded, tortured and left to languish in my own betrayal of my honorable son, Edgar.

FOOL:

Alas, tis a sorry tale, but I can't claim this is news to me, brother. For it's all in the play and I've seen it here and there more than once, upon my word. What catches my attention is that Edmund is both bastard and rogue, both of these by your own making, little by his own.

GLOUCESTER:

It's true, so then pray tell me what's to be done about it, FOOL? For if suicide's no answer, nor a heartbroken King, dead by the breaking, what is there left?

FOOL:

I'm not the one to answer to such tragedy. Perhaps Lear's FOOL may commend some path through that dark wood. I'll seek him out. (*FOOL turns her back walks a bit away, shows different attire and appears to change from a female FOOL into a male FOOL—Lear's FOOL;*).

(*from Lear, Act 1, sc .iv*)

Lear's FOOL:

(*to GLOUCESTER*) Say, you be Lear, now, ok?...*beat...* "Can you make no use of nothing, Nuncle?" (*quoting continues until otherwise stated with GLOUCESTER playing Lear*)

GLOUCESTER: (*voice change to imitate Lear*)

Why no boy, nothing can be made out of nothing.

Lear's FOOL

(*gestures to KENT who stirs bleary eyed but remains lying*):

Prithee tell him, how much the rent of his land come to; he will not believe a FOOL.

GLOUCESTER (as Lear):

A bitter FOOL.

Lear's FOOL:

Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter FOOL and sweet one?

GLOUCESTER (as Lear):

No, lad; teach me.

Lear's FOOL:

That Lord that counseled thee to give away thy land,
Come place him here by me, do thou for him stand.
The sweet and bitter FOOLs will presently appear;
The one's in motley here,(*points to himself*) the other found out there (*points to GLOUCESTER*).

GLOUCESTER (as Lear):

Dost thou call me, LEAR, a FOOL, boy?

Lear's FOOL:

All thy other titles thou hast given away; those that thou wast born with.

KENT:(*languidly*)

this is not altogether FOOLish, my lord.

GLOUCESTER: (*quoting jumps to Act IV sc vi but still as Lear*)
I know thee well enough. Thy name is GLOUCESTER. (*GLOUCESTER changes voicing*): Certainly, I'm GLOUCESTER so this is rather a difficult role you put me in playing both sides—both Lear and Gloucester, FOOL. (*GLOUCESTER jumps to face opposite his own Lear*). Alas, alack the day.
(Jumps back and changes voicing to play Lear). When we are born we cry that we have come to this great stage of FOOLS. (*as GLOUCESTER*) This is crazy.

Lear's FOOL (*back to Act I, sc 4, skipping the parable of the egg and addressing GLOUCESTER's Lear*):

I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are. They'll have me whipped for speaking true; thou'lt have me whipped for holding my peace. I had rather be any kind of thing than a FOOL, and yet I would not be thee, Nuncle; thou hast pared thy wit o' both sides and left nothing i' th' middle. Here comes one o' the parings, that Goneril, an infection indeed.

GLOUCESTER:

(*here he leaves the actual text to be just GLOUCESTER himself*)
that's no prescription there in Will's play; just lays out the problem we know, again.
Have you nothing more FOOL?

(FOOL is back to first) FOOL:

Well let's try the next Scene then. (*FOOL to GLOUCESTER*) You're still Lear in this.
(*He turns again and changes identity to Lear's FOOL*)

GLOUCESTER (as Lear):

Why, what canst thou tell, my boy?

Lear's FOOL:

She (Regan) will taste as like this (like Goneril) as a crab does to a crab. Canst thou tell why one's nose stands i' th' middle on one's face?

GLOUCESTER (Lear):

No.

Lear's FOOL:

Why, to keep one's eyes on either side's nose, tha what a man cannot smell out, he may spy into.

GLOUCESTER (Lear):

I did her wrong. (*now back to being GLOUCESTER*) : Does Lear mean he wronged Regan or Cordelia? Is he still so deluded he might mean Regan? I hope he means Cordelia.

Lear's FOOL: *(to GLOUCESTER's Lear)*
Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?

GLOUCESTER (Lear):
No

Lear's FOOL:
Nor I neither; but I can tell why a snail has a house.

GLOUCESTER (Lear):
Why?

Lear's FOOL:
Why, to put's head in; not to give it away to his daughters, and leave his horns without a case.

GLOUCESTER:
(no longer playing Lear): but there's no answer there neither.

FOOL: *(FOOL returns again to the first FOOL)*:
Surely you would have known if it were otherwise, having played GLOUCESTER for so long.

GLOUCESTER:
What crimes we commit, unknowing.

KENT *(rises)*:
Not to worry, dear GLOUCESTER. These props don't offend me. *(he removes the foam stocks, and walks off carrying them)*.

FOOL *(philosophizes)*:
Were it in the human capacity to find such answers, thusly, what would we humans be but little more than slaves to a predetermined universe, just as if two legged computers. But it may come to that still.

End of scene 5

Scene 6

(set: the Oval Office of the White House, though sparse. President Obama—played by Powell actor wearing a mask sits at his desk. An intercom buzzes and he picks up and puts on a head set and speaks into it)

President Obama

Leslie, I'm expecting Janet Napolitano. I'd like you to show her in the minute she arrives. I don't want her to have to wait. Right. Thanks.

As soon as he takes off the head set and begins to read a book, Napolitano walks in. She's middle aged but well dressed and coifed and wearing medium high heels. She projects a presence.

Oh, good, you're already here. Great to see you Janet. Thanks for coming over quickly. *(He shakes her hand warmly and gently)*. Here sit in the easy chair if you wish. *(She does and he gets up and sits directly across from here in a plain high backed chair that accentuates his perfect posture)*.

Napolitano:

You said it was important. You're our president. I'm here to serve. So what's up?

Obama

Well, you see, I need your help. It's a big favor, but you're the best person for the job.

Napolitano:

That sounds ominous. Please Barack, Mr. President, don't keep me in suspense.

Obama:

It's not exactly a fun job. I need you to take on Homeland Security. You know Michael is leaving. I need someone with your qualities and abilities.

Napolitano:

Oh, my God. You want me to take on the nastiest job in your Administration? What did I do to deserve that reward.

Obama:

Come on. Don't be facetious. I can explain and I think you'll understand.

Napolitano:

Please do explain, because if I can't say 'no' there's got to be a very good reason to say yes.

Obama:

Actually, many good reasons. First your administrative experience.

Napolitano:

Come on, now. We both know that's not a good reason.

Obama:

Janet, just let me do my thing here. Don't get cynical before I give you my full wrap. Ok?

Napolitano:

Ok! *(she smiles at him)*.

Obama

First, you've got a lot of administrative experience. But of a particular kind. As governor of Arizona you were known as a defender of immigrants rights in a state where that racist sheriff who loves locking up and demeaning Mexicans, Joe Arpaio is a favorite son. Where, after you left, they outlawed Ethnic studies and removed books from the schools that gave a Latino or Mexican perspective on anything. I mean your administration worked successfully in that environment.

Napolitano:

Thanks for the praise, but you know that worm turned. Arizona wasn't as hostile a place then as it became after that.

Obama:

Yes. Sure. I know that. But you were known as an advocate and that's the important thing. I need someone who is seen as sympathetic to the plight of undocumented people who will help me deport more people per year than any president in the history of the United States.

Napolitano:

You're saying you want me to preside over the Homeland Security Department so that you can have cover to out-deport those who blame the illegals for everything that's wrong? What can you have in mind? Are you losing a screw?

Obama:

The Republicans are no longer willing to collaborate on Immigration reform. They aren't willing to collaborate on anything at all. But we have to have immigration reform because not doing it creates all kinds of serious problems and social instabilities. You know, for example, that some states denied drivers licenses to the undocumented so we have God knows how many people driving on our highways without licenses or insurance because of these nutty laws. We've got enough homeless people without adding in broken up families that can no longer take care of their own because a bread winner was removed. The list of problems goes on.

Napolitano:

Hold on now. Sure. You know that I know all this. How in the world does that explain why you plan to deport more people per year than George Bush or anyone else?

Obama:

They've got me blocked at every turn, Janet. I need to gain some credibility, some traction within the Republican leadership; give them a reason to see that I'm being flexible and open. I have to throw them a bone, or else they'll never talk about serious immigration reform during my presidency. Also, I'd like to place a woman over Homeland Security and have her make tough decisions on the no-fly lists.

Napolitano:

You realize, of course, that if I do these things I'll be left with no reputation at all. I'll be finished, washed up.

Obama:

I don't think it will be as bad as that. You'll find a good fit. I'll tell you what. If you agree to take the position, and let the deportations go forward and enlarge the no-fly lists, I won't try and keep you in the position whenever you decide you need to get out so long as you stay 1 year.

Napolitano:

I was about to say the same thing. No more than a year. It's the only way I'd consider accepting. You're asking me to do something that's bad for me and could even turn out to be bad for you, for the Party and for the Country. And all I can say is yes? *..beat...* Well, ok?

Obama (*smiling*)

I knew you'd understand, Janet. You're a gem; I'm gonna add you to the White House chess club cause you beat me last time we played. Listen, I've got your back with any blow back that comes your way on this. I promise.

End of Scene 6
and
End of Act I

Act II

Scene 1

Setting: Two men and a woman are seated on pillows around an elusive campfire made of LEDs. Disparate and confusing icons and idols are scattered about the periphery. Appropriate music at the discretion of the director.

SALLY:

I can't remember much. The anesthesia was wearing off, but I was groggy. They were rolling me out of recovery through two double doors. The next thing I knew I was on a camel in a desert. It was unbearably hot. I was wearing hot pants.

SAM:

A camel in the desert? You mean you were dreaming-- or delusional?

SALLY:

Yeah, I thought I was dreaming, like a bad acid trip. But I was so thirsty. My throat was so parched.

SAM:

And then you woke up?

SALLY:

No, then I fell asleep. I dreamed that I had my tonsils removed and wrapped in a flag; that it was a national religious ritual as part of a national holiday. I knew it was a dream because I had had a tonsillectomy when I was young. That helped me get out--clear on myth and reality. Then I awoke.

SAM:

So?

SALLY:

Unfortunately, I awoke near here riding on a camel, dehydrated and somewhat delusional. Fortunately I wasn't alone. Was it Jake or Joaquin or Ali, I don't remember. One of them was leading and he was able to get us out of the heat into a city.

EARL:

How does one get out of the desert into a city? That sounds like a big physical environment makeover, with no phase transition?

SALLY:

Jake or Joaquin or Ali, whoever it was, they knew their way around. This was a city in the desert. It had air conditioning.

SAM:

The desert had air conditioning?

SALLY:

Don't be ridiculous. The city had air conditioning? I just mean they had electricity in the buildings and air conditioners.

SAM:

Well, me, I came in the back door. I got caught of course, but they gave me asylum.

EARL:

You were really lucky.

SAM:

No it wasn't luck. I had a beard, anonymity, a lot of cash and I'm circumcised. I swore that my mother was a Jewess.

SALLY:

That's particularly weird. I swore that my paternal grandfather was an Ayatollah and that the terrorists had stolen my clothes. They said that was good enough.

EARL:

They asked me about religion too. I said I was fleeing from the wrath of God. They said I fit the fourth category; they put me in quarantine and changed my name from Smith to Frankenstein. Later they let me in after they removed my personal quirks.

SALLY:

So now that we're all settled, has anyone had a letter from home?

SAM:

There aren't post offices there anymore, Sal. Only the interfaces and interstices. I got an interface but it went blank because I'd lost my prior identity.

EARL:

I thought that once you had relations with one of the Loracians they gave you an identity card.

SAM:

Yes, I used it but it was of no use as an interface and the machine ate it.

SALLY:

But we're being integrated aren't we? I mean they'll let us work and live here.

SAM:

In a sense. I mean that there is no sense. The sense is nonsense. They want us gone. That was the point in admitting us in the first place. Their rule for diasporans is called the rule of "disintegration." They force migrations then send us on.

SALLY:

Sounds bad. Does anyone know how I can find my camel?

(SALLY starts to walk off stage left, she encounters the FOOL, entering who walks right into her.)

Ooooh, be careful. You almost knocked me down.

FOOL:

I beg your forgiveness. Entirely my fault. I didn't watch where I was going. Are you hurt? May I atone somehow for my unintended assault?

SALLY: *(more relaxed)*

No I'm ok. Have you seen my camel? I'm trying to get out of this place. That would be a big help. I'm SALLY by the way.

FOOL:

Can't say that I have seen a camel.

SALLY:

Not helpful. But I have to get out of this place. Where are we?

FOOL:

Hmmm. So you don't actually know your location then? You have no maps I suppose?

SALLY:

Worse than no map. Nothing on the horizon. But I don't have the energy to go through the whole thing again. All the clocks dead and silent, the calendars' inks run together, no one knows the months and seasons; there is no weather, the sun rises and sets at almost the same moment only to rise and set again forever, day and night turned to a grey mist.

FOOL:

Perhaps I'm asking too much, but do you perhaps know the year or the century here at least? I'm a bit lost myself.

SALLY:

Noope!! Nada. It's as if all the dendritic connections between real things have been pruned back. All that's left is a glimmer of the past—in the mind. (*beat, beat*)...Well even if you can't help, still you're new. It's something. Do come and meet my friends. I was about to desert them, leave them, you know to the whatever, and strike out on my own.

FOOL:

Yes, you might have struck out on your own with that plan. Certainly I'm FOOLish enough to play in your band, regardless, so do introduce me.

SALLY:

I will but first tell me your name, where **you** came from and how you got here.

FOOL:

I know those seem like good questions, but my answers may be less well tempered.

SALLY:

Don't fear to speak. I won't judge you, Mr. or Ms. Your very appearance is a great reassurance that life goes on somewhere. We'll thank you for coming.

FOOL:

Well, I am a FOOL. My name was stolen, but not my place. That's about it. I came from a different scene, and –to be honest—I haven't the foggiest idea how I got here or where I am either. This seems a sort of animated suspension, in my estimation.

SALLY:

Yes, I see what you mean now. I certainly won't ask more questions on that account. Come along with me to the fire.

(they walk back to the campfire)

SAM, EARL (*she gestures*) meet a FOOL without a name. She too knows nothing in particular about this place, but I've found her a calming influence. That's something. So friends we shall be.

SAM:

Should we call you FOOL? You can call me SAM, for indeed SAM I am.

EARL:

Man, SAM, that's plagiarism.

SAM:

Give me a break the guy's dead. He bequeathed his fantasies for kids to use. We're told everything back there is to be forgotten. I refuse to forget. I'm hanging onto anything to remember.

EARL:

Ok. But you know that kind of white-word playing is imitation. Ain't even funny.

SAM:

Neither is this sand pile or scrap heap we're stuck in. Be welcome FOOL. *(SAM pulls onto the stage a guitar on a trolley with a rope pull. Someone hands the FOOL either a string base or tambourine. She plays along as the 3 sing long on a recorded version of Old Dan Tucker)*

"Old Dan Tucker's a fine old man; washed his face with a frying pan, shaved his beard with a wagon wheel, and he died with a toothache in his heel. "

FOOL:

Nice. I like that music there; when's that from? Tis not Elizabethan, but probably writ by a fine FOOL, would be my guess.

EARL:

Comes from a ways though. So popular round the War to end slavery you could have heard them singin it in soldiers' camps on both sides.

FOOL:

Listen friends, I don't know where you belong nor how you got here, but we FOOLS always have something to offer in such ill-defined situations.

SALLY:

Offer away FOOL.

FOOL:

I maybe could get us back to my place on a **thread** if you want somewhere to get to. I mean, out of this,...uh desert.

SALLY:

How'r we to know what we'd be in for? No disrespect to your intentions, FOOL. But I mean one person's paradise can be another person's purgatory. We could get locked into something worse, somewhere inescapable. Might not that happen?

FOOL:

Who knows the future? Fabric tears; ruptures happen. But you'll fit in with the other players, I think, despite your different vernaculars. Reality tends to be elusive but I do know a way to get back onto the page. *(beat)* If you'd want to become part of that scene

we'll climb in through a library. The trick is to always keep a library close at hand. It's not hard to get onto a page once you've found the catalogue. Then you follow the thread.

SAM:

Didn't you hear Sal say that all the interfaces are gone? Computers are dead, catalogues erased.

FOOL:

Don't know what that means, I'm afraid. We don't have whatever those are when I'm from. But I won't worry meself with that. And if you'll follow my drift here, she who doesn't know much about something, might verily know much about a whole lot of things anyway. That is, in the categorically general sense.

EARL:

This one really plays the FOOL well. But sure, I'm all in, for what's to lose. Anything beats this heat and cold. Our water's gone and the only way I can see to get out of here alive is to try something, to become again, to go somewhere.

SALLY:

Wait up. I'm not sure I follow the logic in that, EARL.

SAM:

C'mon Sal. We've really nothing to lose but a few LEDs. That's the way I see it too. We lost our particularity beforehand. Your own story made that clear. It's almost like we we're in a dead space.

FOOL:

Oh my; don't remind me of the dead bodies.

SALLY:

Whoa!!! Hold on. That doesn't sound good. Dead bodies? What's that bout? And no we haven't lost particulars. I'm still SALLY, who arrived on a camel and, frankly, I'm ambivalent. Who'se going to be left here to feed my camel, just for example, or to turn out the lights or flush the toilet?

EARL:

Face it Sal. Your camel has run off. He'll fend for himself. Camels and deserts aren't strangers to each other. We've got no ties here. We're the ones stuck in the dark and out of tune; we're the wanderers, not the camel. And toilet? Where's that?

(The Fool leads with Sally second as they wend their way in serpentine fashion through a series of vines and other hanging obstacles that have dropped onto an area of the stage at rear during a musical interlude; and then disappear off stage.)

End of Scene

Scene 2

(set: an office identical to the Oval Office previously, except the desk is different and pointing in a different direction. Napolitano sits in the same easy chair. The man in the straight backed chair now is Sam, wearing a Jerry Brown mask).

Brown:

Yes, I realize you had a tough time with Homeland Security. This is different. We need someone strong to lead the University. We're talking about perhaps the most prestigious University in the world. It's a plum. You can hire and fire whomever you want. You've got a reputation as a strong administrator. And except for all those deportations you're known as intelligent, sensible, a liberal. If my Latino colleagues in the legislature raise any questions about immigration we'll explain you were just doing your job and didn't write your own marching orders.

Napolitano:

I really do want to do this, but, look Jerry, I know as sure as I'm sitting here that you want me to do something that's still not on the table. So out with it.

Brown:

You can live where you want. You'll be in charge. I'm not over your shoulder. Not only that, I can handle the Regents of the University. They're my people and you'll have their support.

Napolitano:

Come on Jerry. Bottom line now. Bottom line.

Brown: *(smile-smirk)*

You're being too cynical. It's not like that. There have been some problems like accusations about high administrative salaries and big golden parachutes; there are some outstanding matters concerning provost sexual harassment, there was noise about Berkeley's new football stadium—the cost and built on the fault line--and budgetary cuts to the less valuable sports programs. It's all small stuff compared to things you've handled well before. We need a high profile pro and we've got to get more money flowing into the University to keep and recruit good faculty. Don't worry, there's no hidden agenda.

Napolitano:

All small stuff, you're saying? If that's the small stuff then you're still holding out on me, Jerry. I'm not saying no. I really like the idea. Just tell me what you expect so I'm prepared.

Brown:

Well, there are a few high up administrators that do have to go. The rest is just what I said. No big deals, but added all together it's a big responsibility that requires strong leadership. There is also the concern about boycotts of Israel being pressed on the campuses. It's another minor annoyance. We'll let the Regents and Legislature defend Israel. You won't even be involved in that. So Janet, it's just that it's a huge institution with great responsibilities, financial needs, and I think you're the best fit.

End of Scene 2

Scene 3

Setting: pastoral scene as in Act I, Scene 5

GLOUCESTER and POWELL are talking together congenially down stage center as the lights rise. Perhaps they are on bar stools drinking beer. The pile of dead bodies is visible again in the background left, but now up on a riser with even more bodies.

POWELL:

But the thing I don't understand about your case is why it was the bastard son who betrayed you, if you get my drift. It would seem that, given your love for him and acceptance of him as your son, he would have been grateful and loving and so on. Is it implied here that some people are just born to evil?

GLOUCESTER:

Well look at it this way: (*GLOUCESTER waves KENT to come on stage from the wings and KENT begins from Lear, Act 1, sc 1. KENT is now in attire as the Earl of KENT*)

KENT:

Is this not your son, my lord?

GLOUCESTER:

His breeding, sir hath been at my charge. I have so often blushed to acknowledge him that now I am hardened to't.

KENT:

I cannot conceive you.

GLOUCESTER:

Sir, this young fellow's mother could; whereupon she grew round-wombed, and had indeed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault?

KENT:

I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper.

GLOUCESTER:

But I have a son, sir, by order of law, some year elder than this, who yet is no dearer in my account: though this knave came saucily to the world before he was sent for, yet as his mother's fair, there was good sport at his making, and the whore's son must be acknowledged. And so he is here before you. Do you know this noble gentleman, Edmund? He is the EARL of KENT.

Beat, beat, beat...

POWELL:

Indeed, this sounds just and kind on the surface, but being that I was often referred to as darkie and worse, I do get your drift, that there's perhaps a sulfurous whiff in your comparison issued to Kent. Subtle it is, but not predestination, that you betrayed the very love you yourself proclaimed for Edmund. There's a riddle in't, I think, but the ridicule's right there in the liberalism of the words. I know it would have struck hard twas I were he; as it must have im as well, to be so spoken of, in public, as degraded.

GLOUCESTER:

Indeed.

POWELL:

Indeed, but how did you come to realize this failing of yourself?

GLOUCESTER:

It was upon my near-death by my own will at the cliffs of Dover that I had time to reflect. Edgar's love of me and his hatred at Edmund's betrayal-- after that, it was, brought me to it that I played a part in who Edmund became well beyond his conception.

POWELL:

A lesson there, I suppose, but surely I can find no sympathy for Iago in it.

GLOUCESTER:

Iago? No. I had no thoughts of that conclusion, general. Edmund is dead and needs no sympathy either. But still, the lesson's learned, though at great cost.

POWELL puts his arm around GLOUCESTER as if GLOUCESTER were his own elderly father and endearingly leads him off the wing, stage right.

End of Scene 3

there is lighting change

Scene 4

*Enter the FOOL and SALLY; from up stage right; in a spot. A spot light also comes up showing that EMILIA and HORATIO are gabbing up left and studying paintings,(they are pointing at various things in these painting) copies of originals which are either hung or projected on a wall facing the audience, up stage left. The paintings from left to right are 1) Peter Paul Rubens: Consequences of War (1638-9), 2) Francisco Goya's series: Horrors of War, 3) Picasso's Guernica 4) El Greco's Portrait of Jorge Manuel Theatocopoulos 4) Picasso's Portrait of a Painter (after the El Greco) and 5) apart and at about up center hanging on the backdrop, Picasso's Harlequin with wine glass. As FOOL and SALLY enter the lighting focuses on them and the spot on EMILIA and HORATIO fades, but not to black. FOOL and SALLY, stay stage right and **do a dance to a Dvorak rhythmic peasant dance melody (in the background)** and then conversing they very slowly proceed left toward the Harlequin. EMILIA and HORATIO are still seen engrossed with the paintings further left.*

SALLY:

I was the reluctant one; but I followed your instructions. I told them not to look back at the falsity of an idyllic past if they hoped to make it through. I did warn them that their romantic passions could corrupt the transition you offered. I even referred them to the story of Orpheus and Euridice as you suggested.

FOOL:

You did right seeking peace of mind for them, but temptation is always worsened by absence.

SALLY:

I know that's true, what you say, but EARL kept repeating his mantra that Eurydice was behind not in front of Orpheus, while I was in front, and so, by my logic, he insisted, they should look only back and not ahead while walking. Men! Walking blind they tumbled off the thread into that abyss and so I guess they're lost, perhaps dead.

(During the next sequence there is an occasional crying out and moan from off stage)

FOOL:

Surely, abuse of Greek myths can be catastrophic.

SALLY:

Do you imply blame, there? Surely that's not the worst of abuses. That's unfair of you, FOOL. Wasn't it you who recommended that I bring up the Greek myth to move them along on the thread?

FOOL:

True indeed that I tricked you so, but for the good of all. Better to leave people living their dreams than to add them, depressed, to the pile of dead bodies as yonder. *(he points at the pile of bodies which has been moved--off the riser--to down stage left across from them)* The work of living is too weighty upon us to have to carry those who don't choose to live. And heavy that men be in their bold intentions, they are the harder for us to carry through a lifetime if they won't attend to the commons.

SALLY:

I don't fault dreams, but it's the self-absorption: empty rhetoric, dastardly deeds which cause anguish. Yet do tell me why SAM and EARL still cry out in suffering if they were but dreaming their romances, and have passed on from this world?

FOOL:

It isn't your friends who cry out. You're mistaken *(he walks a step or two to the left)*...Look here, we've arrived now. The cry you heard probably came from over there, from the Reubens painting and Picasso's Guernica, there on the wall, I often hear women crying out to each other across time, against these bloody afflictions.

SALLY:

But Picasso painted that Guernica in 1937 after that Nazi bombing, a massacre at Guernica. In Spain. I thought you came from the way back past. How do you know of Picasso's paintings and some of these others? Have we not gone back in time?

FOOL:

Time, Time. Forward, back and so on. What an idea. Fools are timeless. I don't come from anytime. But here's the rub: just at the moment when that bombing massacre inspired Picasso, I repeat, at that very moment was born another murderous general right over there *(she gestures toward Powell)* You'll meet him soon enough. Time resides where we construct it, day by day, minute by minute and millennium by millennium with our deeds, myths, and delusions of grandeur. Being the FOOL I can stand apart, but only so long as I may be a FOOL. The particulars change but playing the FOOL does not.

SALLY:

You think yourself God, then? Is that it? To me you look no different, a woman, flesh and blood, no different from me.

FOOL:

I play not your God or gods. I am what I am, though different I may be. Tis the director's role, given me to guide the players, just as I have brought you here. Come, your turn to meet people from Shakespeare's works and world.

(light lilting background music as FOOL and SALLY saunter over to meet EMILIA and HORACIO. As the four stand talking inaudibly with each other and gesturing at the war

paintings a version of the Irish anti-war folk song, Mrs. McGrath, comes up slowly to full as they then prepare to and then leave. As they are just off, POWELL (and Gloucester) move to center stage from down right. The music fades, as POWELL speaks, only to return again whenever it can be fitted in without disrupting the ability to hear the flow of POWELL and GLOUCESTER)

POWELL:

(pointing with a wave at the anti-war paintings, and then focusing directly on the Guernica)

I ordered that that painting there be covered days before I went before the Security Council and the press. We can't have that. Who took off the covering. I ordered that it be born away to the Mint and locked in a vault. Who was responsible for defying that order?

GLOUCESTER: *(stepping back a ways from Powell)*

I am the one, in both cases.

POWELL:

You, dear father? Why, oh why would you so betray me?

GLOUCESTER:

No, my boy. I betrayed Edgar. But you have betrayed yourself. Now I understand why the Moor suicided. It wasn't just in remorse for killing his beloved, was it? Your duplicity is real, though well concealed. You are he.

POWELL:

You dare to speak to me thus?

GLOUCESTER:

Well, Shagspeare took my eyes but he restored my dignity and my soul. I might hope to do the same for you, son. Inflaming you might be for the good of introspection.

POWELL:

I will have you sent to Cuba and force fed to Guantanamo hunger strikers for this.

GLOUCESTER:

All our days are numbered in any case. Take it from me, torture is bad but so is giving up on life—which I was so near to doing in Lear. But I don't believe your threat. You can't be such a retributive reprobate of a fellow, not like Lear's Regan or my Edmund. You wouldn't have me tortured, would you?

POWELL: *(confused)*

As you are not my true father, nor I your Edgar, I'll have to think about that.

GLOUCESTER:

Honestly, I never saw this side of you, Colin. I suppose even in my dotage I have much to learn from life.

FOOL *(returns to stage from the left wing)*

Perfect, GLOUCESTER. I loved that ending. But you don't really think you can change him by arousing the demon in him, do you? We need to add a twist somehow.

POWELL: *(acting erratically and starting to lose control)*

FOOL, you are not welcome in this particular conversation. Be gone or I'll have you arrested.

FOOL: *(unaware that POWELL is no longer acting but has gone mad)*

Have me arrested? We'll do our parts as agreed and that's all, for tis why we're here. There's nothing written about me being arrested or this extra threat, though I would hear out your ideas on that improv.

POWELL:

(pulls a 45 pistol from his holster as, just then, a portable closet is slid onto the stage up right. The FOOL begins to get the picture: See this?

FOOL:

What. What's this. Are you mad? This isn't right.

and she runs into the closet and slams the door. GLOUCESTER hurriedly goes up stage left cries for help in a forelorn voice as)

POWELL:

Come out of there before I come in and pull you out.

(all the other actors and GLOUCESTER come rushing back onto the stage and try to calm POWELL; there is much commotion, but to no avail).

SALLY:

(comes alongside POWELL and touches his shoulder, speaking softly)

General, General POWELL. I'm SALLY. I'm from New York also. At least that's where I was born back when New York was New York, but it's gone.

POWELL: *(beyond confused now)*

What? Where's New York? I'm Venetian, born in Carthage, in Africa.

SALLY:

Well if that's how it is, we have a Carthage in New York and a Rome as well.

POWELL:

(Now interested enough to be distracted but still holding the gun in such a way that no one dares try and take it from him.) Hmm. So?

SALLY:

I saw your speech at the UN. It was a great acting job. I mean that sincerely. Magnificent. Marvelous!!

POWELL:

Oh, thank you. That is kind of you. I had thought about becoming an actor as a thespian in high school. But I chose West Point instead. *(At least POWELL no longer thinks he's OTHELLO and is part way back to some reality orientation).*

SALLY:

I know this FOOL's a FOOL. But consider she says it's her first time trying to direct a play. And playing a fool to boot.

POWELL:

Play? I thought this was the United Nations. But I like the idea of a woman director.

SALLY:

Well, let's not go there. But, no it's not the UN. That's gone the way of our country. Look there, *(she points)* the Guernica there isn't the only painting. We're in a timeless exhibition. They've borrowed the Guernica as the centerpiece. And the exhibition isn't only about war. See there, the El Greco portrait next to Picasso's portrait of a painter? Notice how Picasso uses the form and composition to pay homage to a mentor from the past. He's highlighting the idea of historical continuity despite the evolution of abstraction. The exhibit is about continuity. Unfortunately, war is a central theme in human history. That's why it's such a big part of the exhibit. See over here *(she points)* Picasso's checkered Harlequin with wineglass there. He sits, the clown, like the earlier FOOLS, a romantic, clothed in the checkered history, pondering. But we don't know what exactly he ponders.

POWELL:

They've put too many paintings depicting the horrors of war here. Sure, war is terrible but it's also a glorious place where the particulars and the general meet in a spectacle of awesome savagery and heroism. Don't mock that. It's glory beyond the imaginable. Shock and awe. You know I designed Shock and Awe to magnify war's power over man. These paintings bring all that back to mind, but too vividly. It's upsetting me. And it distracts from the more circumspect reality we must live, our lives on the stage, directed. That's the life we need so we can move on in life.

HORATIO: *(to POWELL)*

Is that what you think art should do? Distract us, like theater, so we can move on?

POWELL:

Of course it does that. It's a forgery of reality. What's most real is what's most permanent—like who wins, who profits, who rules, and how the spoils are distributed, not these poignant heart rending romantic images of those who suffer, of their pain and the ravages. That suffering is too harsh. The spoils represent the real future; the material facts on the ground. Death is in the past—to be forgotten. In America we decided to call the spoils “trickling down the benefits”. Some have called spoils the “right to life.” *(by now POWELL has calmed and he falls into a silent reverie, lowers his arm and at the end of these lines he hands his pistol to SALLY who passes it to HORATIO).* Here, take this. Don't know what I was thinking there. *(In this transition Powell's body actually diminishes in stature and posture. He loses his imposing quality).*

FOOL:

(she has been peeking from the closet and now as POWELL calms down, and passes off the gun she comes out of the closet a bit stealthily, making her way to center stage and speaks to all)

Very nice, beautifully done, general. You had me worried for a moment though.

POWELL *(suddenly out of his mind again)*

You, again. Who the hell are you anyway? A tyrant? You remind me of someone I once knew, very beautiful. I thought I had driven her from my mind. And yet you keep returning to haunt me. Didn't I tell you to be gone.

(this time he draws a sword; the FOOL flees to the closet again and slams the door shut as all the actors stand paralyzed, unable to respond, shocked by the scene. POWELL charges at the closet and runs it through with the sword 2 or three times. There is a scream of great pain. The crowd rushes over and pulls POWELL away. EMILIA opens the closet door. The bloody body of the FOOL falls to the floor in front of the closet. As several people bend over the dying FOOL and try to comfort her, POWELL wrenches himself free from the grasp of the others).

GLOUCESTER:

What have you done, my son. I had thought twould end better for us this time around.

EMILIA:

(now it's apparent that EMILIA herself has a knife sticking from her abdomen and she is on her knees; HORATIO is by her side)

Moor, your Desdemona was chaste, she loved thee, cruel Moor. So too our Fool.

So comes my soul to bliss, as I speak true.

So speaking as I think, alas, I die at the hand of Iago. Oh lay me by my mistress' side *(she dies).*

(HORATIO picks up EMILIA and gently lays her alongside the FOOL).

POWELL (*as OTHELLO, agitated and crying*):

Oh! Oh, no! Whip me, ye devils,
Blow me about in winds, roast me in sulfur,
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire-
(*He rushes over to the body of the FOOL and is in a frenzy*).
Oh, Desdemona dead! That FOOL twas her.

(HORATIO wrests the sword from POWELL)

HORATIO: (*playing LODOVICO*)

What shall be said of thee, general, having fallen so low?

POWELL (OTHELLO):

I am he that was OTHELLO.
Call me an honorable murderer, if you will,
For naught I did in hate, but all in honor.
And as one, not emotional, but brought to tears
By all the wrong and suffering that he hath wrought.

And say, besides, that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and turbaned Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the State,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog,
And smote him, thus.

(*he pulls out a dagger, hidden under his uniform and stabs himself in the abdomen and falls*)

HORATIO: (*playing LODOVICO*)

Oh, bloody period! I thought he had no other weapons.

OTHELLO:

(*on his knees bending over the FOOL and kissing her as he is dying*)
I kissed thee ere I killed thee. No way but this,
Killing myself, to die upon a kiss. (he dies).

HORATIO (as LODOVICO):

What horror! What grief! *(wave of arms, a gesture to encompass the whole scene; pause, with time drawn out by the stunned players)*

Yet to you, Lieutenant Cassio, *(of course there is no Cassio on stage)*
now appointed Lord Governor of Cyprus,

Remains the censure of the hellish villain, Wiago, who plotted all this

The time, the place, the torture. **Oh, enforce it! Yes, do you so!**

Myself will straight abroad, and to the State

These heavy acts with heavy heart relate.....*(a brief moment as SALLY rises slowly, stunned and amazed from within the group)*

SALLY: *(assertively)*

Wait now. Just wait.... LODOVICO-HORATIO ,...

Confounded confusion of these doubled parts.

Your words, HORATIO, remind me of your speech to FORTINBRAS.

But this is not what Hamlet asked of you, HORATIO.

Here tis different now. We've got the Duke Dick, the W, the dead general himself
and all those who, like Claudius, have brought us down

With tortures, murder, ego plots. Would you dare replicate that?

Hold. Hold fast.

Tis it not the corrupt State itself which you here claim to honor

that encourages men and women to so strive in their hubris.

Why report to Duke Dick or any of these monsters?

Why trust to that which requires us to divide and conquer ourselves?

Nor can heavy hearts be rectified by selfish rage and retribution, nor greed,

Disguised in self-righteous garb. What misbegotten loyalties!!

In a distant past the Greek playwright had the goddess Athena declare

Against the pride of retribution. Do you not remember that?

LODOVICO, send that evil man, the criminal Wiago, to the Geneva Court,

Let justice roll down on us all like waters from the mountaintop.

Otherwise, we are all forever lost.

Already have we lost our lands, our lives, our labor, our rights, our time and place

The sea, the sea is dead but rises against us in Tempest; our bearings uncharted, our
earth cries out and too our humanity cries out "stop it, stop."

How can it be that we have allowed history to be so mangled,

Comedy to turn to the farce of human tragedy.

So mantled in deception, that memory fails us?

Are we born to live only in eternal darkness?

Why do we allow it? How can we allow this of ourselves?

Stage goes silent and lights lower. Stage hands push, throw or drag the dummies to the foot of the front row of the audience, as the live actors form a motionless tableau resembling one of Goya's paintings from the Disasters of War series (1810-1820) in the diminished light and they hold the pose, frozen. The FOOL, EMILIA and POWELL remain bloody and dead on stage. (brief PAUSE with silence)

Now the picture of the Picasso Harlequin with wine glass (projected onto the back of stage) grows and grows in size. Then, magically he appears to move and he appears to even speak and turns back into a still frame: is it Donald Trump? but no words are heard. after which the Harlequin shrinks back to normal size and the GHOST's voice (from Hamlet) returns on mic (softly but with with reverb):

Swear it, Swear!

End of scene 4

actors leave the stage and stage lights come up a bit very slowly so as to indicate something still incomplete as stage hands set up for epilogue.

Epilogue

(setting: the Professor's Office; both sitting. He offers her a glass of water. The dead bodies—i.e. stuffed or manikins—remain where they were in the prior scene)

Sally:

Well professor, what did you think?

Professor:

Yes, interesting, but as some predicted, the audience, the class, was quite underwhelmed and confused by your work. Their approbation at the finale was not exactly three curtains. .

Sally:

Sure, I was there too. But what did you think? You yourself? I want your own opinion.

Professor:

It's a dark view of human nature, I think. Rather cynical for a young person. And I think it will take some work to get into shape. Still, you do have quite an imagination, and some wit also Sally. I was intrigued by how your mind worked to interweave these complicated themes. There may be too many thoughts and ideas in such a piece for many to grasp.

Sally:

So it sounds like it didn't move you; you didn't really like it. It just didn't work for you either?

Professor:

Don't over-read me, Sal. I'm still wondering about the cynicism. Where does that come from?

Sally:

That's the subject for another play; it's a personal question you're asking. I don't want to go into that now.

Professor:

Oh, I see. Ok, then. I admit I was rather taken by how you brought the tragedies up to date. How you used your Fool and messed with the Lear fool. And I never thought of Colin Powell as a reincarnation of Othello. He's not a precise replica of course, and there's no similar tragic love story at all with Powell. Still the haunting combination of Powell as the author of Shock and Awe warfare in Iraq fits with Othello's final speech as does Powell's tragic self-exposure at the UN which makes the analogy particularly poignant.

Sally:

Thanks.

Professor:

How strange that Aleppo appeared in Othello and now again in our wars. But Sally, you'd still have to do a lot of work to get this up before an audience, as a real production. At our first conference that seemed your main goal and I was shocked. But if you want to do all that work, I'm going to help you find a good director. You might have to drop other things for now. Of course you can say no.

Sally:

Really? *(shakes her head in bewilderment)* Really? You really liked it that much to help find a legit director? Oh my God.... I can't believe it. Especially with that bumper class reception, I thought I'd bombed. Oh my, oh my god. Thank you so much, Mitch. I'll do anything, anything to see it come to life on stage. You're the sweetest man ever.

Sally gets up, exuberant, approaches the Professor who is seated and she tries to hug him. He doesn't reciprocate her embrace. (at first) but sits still; he is overwhelmed, tries to ward her off.

Professor:

Now, hold on here. You know Sally, I'm not one of those academics you read about who takes advantage of his female students. *(Smiling in a fatherly way)*. You shouldn't offer yourself like this, not even in thanks to people who support you.

(Sally stands back away and looks at him puzzled, almost horrified)

Sally:

What? What are you saying?

Professor:

Oh. No that's not right. *(beat)* Hasn't it got round to you that I'm gay? My last comment was just me playing the fool for you. It was a bad joke. Certainly inappropriate on my part. *(Down in the mouth, he shakes his head, very chagrined at his behavior.....several seconds pass. Sally smiles widely and approaches him again; pulls him up by putting her arms under his armpits and gives him a full embracing hug. Now he lowers his raised hands and reciprocates, smiles, and they stand holding each other, swaying in rhythm.)*

Lights: End of Scene, Act, Play