

SOS at Richmond Theater



Donna Van Oss

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P.O. Box 1400
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*To my father,
Donald Arnold,
whose love of drama and literature
inspired mine.*

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SOS at Richmond Theatre was first produced March 13, 2002, at Louisiana School for the Deaf, Baton Rouge, LA, by the Robert E. Lee High School senior drama class: Donna Van Oss, director; Alexis Escudero, lights; and Katie McCarthy, prompter and sound.

BECKY: Lee Alice Hillman

VICKY: Ginny Overall

JACK: Alex McKey

MELANIE: Brandy Davis

LARREE: Cy Scott

MOLLY: Lauren Hendrix

CARMEN: Rhonda Taylor

DEE DEE: Angel Omoike

BLAIR: Desiree Hebert

CRYSTAL: Paula Neal

DUSTIN: Travis Bradley

ERIC: Jermaine Adams

GRACE: Ebony Jones

LIZ: Ashley Ferdinand

BERT: John Mandeville

TODD: Josh Williams

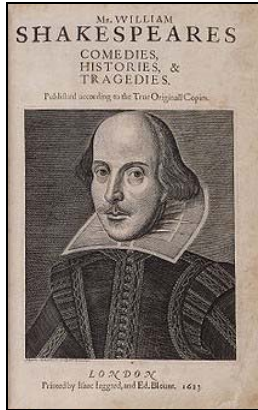
LAWYER: Chad Darensbourg

SAFETY INSPECTOR: Chris Taylor

SOS at Richmond Theatre

COMEDY. In order to save the Richmond Theater from being torn down, the summer production of *Romeo and Juliet* needs to be a huge financial success. A wacky, Diet Coke-addicted director who just produced a disco version of *Moby Dick* is hired to direct the production, which features a motley cast of high school actors. The director is certain that a modern Mardi Gras-inspired *Romeo and Juliet* set in New Orleans and complete with plenty of fur and feathers will ensure box office success. But when the needed theater supplies are either out of stock or get lost in the mail, the cast and crew are forced to use basic sets, props, and costumes and allow the beauty of Shakespeare's language to take center stage. This hilarious comedy is a fun way to introduce *Romeo and Juliet* to student actors.

Performance Time: Approximately 100-120 minutes.



First Folio, 1623

About the Story

Romeo and Juliet was popular during Shakespeare's lifetime (1564-1616) and has become one of Shakespeare's most frequently performed plays and one of his most famous. It is not known exactly when Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet*, but scholars believe the play was probably written sometime between 1591 and 1595 and was first published in 1597. Since its publication, *Romeo and Juliet* has been adapted many times for the stage as well as for film and opera. The most famous musical adaptation is *West Side Story*, with music by Leonard Bernstein and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. *West Side Story* debuted on Broadway in 1957 and was made into a film in 1961.

Characters

(7 M, 7 F, 4 flexible, opt. extras)

(With doubling: 6 M, 7 F, 3 flexible)

REBECCA "BECKY" RICHMOND: Takes over Richmond Theater after her mother dies; wears casual business clothes.

VICTORIA "VICKY" RICHMOND: Becky's younger sister who would like to sell Richmond Theater; wears stylish clothes.

LARREE LAWRENCE: Wacky director known for his disco version of "Moby Dick"; wears wild, flamboyant 1970s clothes and loves Diet Coke; male.

BERT DUNCAN: Nerdy student; SOS cast member who plays Romeo; wears nerdy clothes and has a nasally voice.

GRACE HOWARD: Quiet girl and new student; SOS cast member who plays Juliet and Abraham; wears regular clothing.

BLAIR HAMILTON: Popular student; SOS cast member who plays Sampson and Lady Capulet; wears trendy clothes; female.

CRYSTAL BRADFORD: Blair's friend and groupie; SOS cast member who serves as the narrator; wears trendy clothes.

DUSTIN SINCLAIR: Popular student football player; SOS cast member who plays Mercutio, the Prince, and Balthasar; wears trendy clothes and a letterman jacket.

ERIC MORGAN: Popular student basketball player; SOS cast member who plays Benvolio and Lord Capulet; wears trendy clothes and a letterman jacket.

LIZ EDWARDS: Nervous student; SOS cast member who plays the Nurse and Gregory; wears regular clothing and carries a backpack and purse.

TODD HATCHER: Shy student and captain of the golf team; SOS cast member who plays Friar Laurence, Tybalt, and the Servant; wears regular clothes.

DEE DEE DIXON: Richmond Theater receptionist who chews bubblegum, files her nails, and reads magazines; speaks with a New Jersey accent; wears casual work clothes.

JACK KELLY: Set designer who has worked at Richmond Theater for 10 years; wears casual work clothes and a tool belt.

MELANIE/MALCOLM CARTER: Costume designer at Richmond Theater for 12 years; wears casual work clothes, a wrist pin cushion, and a measuring tape around her neck; flexible.

MOLLY/MARK BITTERS: Landlord who would like to sell the theater; flexible.

CARMEN/CARL ROCHE: Developer who would like to buy Richmond Theater, tear it down, and turn it into a luxury hotel; wears a business suit; flexible.

LAWYER: Wears a business suit and watch; flexible.

SAFETY INSPECTOR: Dee Dee's brother; wears overalls and carries a clipboard; male.

EXTRAS (Optional): As SOS cast members and Stagehands.

Option for Doubling: Lawyer/Safety Inspector

Costumes

Costumes may be as simple or elaborate as your budget allows. SOS cast members wear "Summer of Shakespeare" T-shirts and casual pants or jeans. *Romeo and Juliet* costumes can consist of black shirts and pants enhanced with skirts, tunics, hats, scarves, aprons, weapons, and masks to represent the different characters. Choosing a color to represent each feuding family and a neutral color for other characters helps distinguish the characters onstage. The Narrator can wear a Renaissance costume or a dressy outfit. The Nurse must wear an apron as part of her costume.

Setting

July 7-31. The rehearsal room of the Richmond Theater.

Set

Rehearsal room of Richmond Theater. It is a simple room with an exit DSR, USR, and SL. Against the SR wall is a chair and a desk with a desk phone on it. Ten chairs are stacked against the SL wall. Flats, theater supplies, and an assortment of props are stacked against the back wall.

Romeo and Juliet set. The front curtain will be opened partially to reveal the set, which consists of flats arranged in a semi-circle with entrances SR and SL. The only additional props needed for the *Romeo and Juliet* performance are a chair or ladder and a bench.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Scene 1: July 7, lawyer's office. Played in front of curtain with a table and three chairs.

Scene 2: July 8, Richmond Theater rehearsal room.

Scene 3: July 9, Richmond Theater rehearsal room.

Scene 4: July 10, Richmond Theater rehearsal room.

ACT II

Scene 1: July 10, a short time later. Richmond Theater rehearsal room.

Scene 2: July 11, Richmond Theater rehearsal room.

Scene 3: July 15, Richmond Theater rehearsal room.

Scene 4: July 20, Richmond Theater rehearsal room.

Scene 5: July 24, Richmond Theater rehearsal room.

ACT III

Scene 1: July 29, Richmond Theater stage. Final performance of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Scene 2: July 31, Richmond Theater rehearsal room.

Props

| | |
|---|--|
| Big flip board to show the current date of the action | Large purse, for Liz |
| Briefcase | Diet Coke can |
| Mourning clothes, for Becky and Vicky | Purse, for Crystal |
| Purse, for Becky | Hairbrush |
| Wadded-up legal papers | Wallet, for Dee Dee |
| Letter | Purse, for Dee Dee |
| Nail file | 8 Summer of Shakespeare T-shirts, for SOS cast |
| Bubblegum | Bowl |
| Pen | Assorted props |
| Notepad | Papers |
| Magazine | <i>Complete Works of Shakespeare</i> |
| Clipboard | Binder |
| Business card | Cans of sodas and candy bars for SOS cast |
| Makeup | Ladder or chair |
| Compact or hand mirror | Bottle for potion |
| Briefcase and assorted bags for Larree | Bottle for poison |
| Cell phone, for Dee Dee | 2 Daggers |
| Sign that reads, "Summer of Shakespeare! Sign in here for 'Romeo and Juliet' auditions" | Swords |
| Backpack, for Liz | Clothes covered in feathers, for Larree |
| Daily planner | Apron, for Nurse costume |
| 9 Scripts | Wads, rolls of money |
| | Pillow and cover, for Juliet |

Sound Effects

Phone ringing

Buzzing sound for paging system

Knock at door

Applause (opt.)

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“This ought to be some play
with a nerd as Romeo
and a dork as Juliet.”

—Eric

ACT I

Scene 1

(AT RISE: July 7, lawyer's office. In front of the curtain. There is a table and three chairs onstage. Wearing mourning clothes, Becky and Vicky enter SR and sit. Carrying a briefcase, Lawyer enters SL and sits.)

LAWYER: *(Monotone voice.)* Good morning. As you know, your mother has died. She left a will; however, there are a few things that need to be settled. *(Opens briefcase, digs around, pulls out wadded-up paper, and then tries to straighten it out. Becky and Vicky are getting annoyed.)* As you know, your deceased father, Charles E. Richmond, started a very successful company.

BECKY: *(Tearful.)* Yes. C.E.R. Pens.

LAWYER: Right. Anyway, at the time of his death, he had amassed a fortune including stocks and bonds, a total of \$3.6 million dollars.

(Becky and Vicky grab each other for support when they hear the sum.)

VICKY: *(Excitedly.)* So we get all of it?

(Lawyer looks at papers. Long pause.)

LAWYER: Hmm, no.

VICKY: *(Slams hands on the table.)* What?!

LAWYER: *(Looking at papers again.)* Your father had stringent rules about how his money was to be spent. After your father's death, your mother received an allowance every year. You and your sister received lump sums of \$25,000 when you turned 21. That is the only money you will receive from the C.E.R. Pen fortune. Your mother did leave you something, though.

BECKY: What?

LAWYER: *(Checking document.)* She left you the Richmond Theater.

VICKY: *(Angrily.)* That's it? The theater?!

LAWYER: No. Also this letter. *(Pulls out a letter and then looks at his watch.)* Now, if you will excuse me, I have to give a motivational speech to a law class. Good day.

(Lawyer exits SL. Angry, Vicky jumps up.)

VICKY: The theater?! The theater?! All she left us is the theater and a stupid letter!

BECKY: Now, now, calm down, Vicky. It's not that bad. At least we got the theater. What more could we ask for?

VICKY: *(Angrily.)* It's "Victoria," and I'll tell you what we could ask for...more money! That lump sum Father left us wasn't enough, Rebecca.

BECKY: *(Defensively.)* It's "Becky," and it was a fair sum. If you hadn't spent it all on clothes and parties and other worthless stuff, you'd still have some left.

VICKY: I have a social image to keep, unlike you. You are just like Mother...always interested in lost causes like that little theater. *(Starts to circle table.)* I don't see where you get off criticizing me. At least I have a social name.

BECKY: Isn't your social name "in debt"? Why couldn't you have gone to college like me and earned a real name for yourself?

VICKY: Well, isn't yours "receptionist"?! I thought you were going to be some kind of famous director.

BECKY: Look, we can fight all day, but there's no point. Let's see what Mom's letter says. *(Opens letter. Reads.)* "Dear girls, I know you weren't left with much—"

VICKY: That's for sure.

BECKY: *(Reads.)* "So I am leaving you the Richmond Theater. It's been my pride and joy for so many years. I hoped to buy it one day, so I have been saving money for years from every show, every fund drive, and from whatever little money I could save from your father's allowance. I have accumulated \$70,000 dollars so far."

(Vicky grabs the letter from Becky.)

VICKY: What? \$70,000 dollars?! Way to go, Mom! *(Continues reading.)* "It is, however, hidden somewhere in the theater so no one can steal it. Please find the money and buy Richmond Theater. It is my dying wish to keep the theater alive. I wish you two girls the best of luck, and always remember...the show must go on. Love, Mom."

BECKY: Isn't that sweet? Mom always loved the theater.

VICKY: You think it's sweet that Mom wanted to throw away her money on some rinky-dink theater? You're crazy, just like she was.

BECKY: What's crazy about having a passion for something? The theater made Mom very happy, and working in a theater, even as a receptionist, has made me happy, too.

VICKY: Mom would have been a lot happier if you had stayed here and worked in her theater.

BECKY: Oh, don't start. You didn't stay here, either.

VICKY: Mom was glad to see me go.

BECKY: That's not true. Look, let's stop arguing. We're here now and Mom's gone.

VICKY: Fine. I guess we should go see what the old Richmond Theater looks like these days. We can start cleaning out Mom's office.

BECKY: It's pretty late. Let's wait until tomorrow.

VICKY: I guess you're right. I'll see you there bright and early.

BECKY: I'll be there. Don't worry.

(Becky and Vicky exit SR.)

Scene 2

(AT RISE: July 8, Richmond Theater rehearsal room. Dee Dee is at her desk filing her nails and chewing gum. Jack and Melanie are standing around looking at stacked set pieces USC.)

JACK: I can't believe Ms. Evelyn is gone. It just doesn't seem possible.

MELANIE: I know. This place just won't be the same without her.

JACK: I'm glad to be back at work today. I just don't know what to do with myself if I'm not here working on sets for the summer program. I've remodeled and repainted my apartment three times.

MELANIE: I know what you mean. My dog's getting tired of wearing a new outfit every day. I need some actors to sew for.

(Phone rings once and then twice. Jack and Melanie look at Dee Dee. On the third ring, Dee Dee sighs loudly, slams down her nail file, and finally answers the phone.)

DEE DEE: (Into phone.) Yeah. I mean, thank you for calling Richmond Theater. How can I help you?

(Jack and Melanie roll their eyes through the following phone conversation.)

JACK: (To Melanie.) Remind me again why we kept her.

MELANIE: I really don't remember myself.

DEE DEE: (Writes as she talks. Into phone.) Yeah, yeah, uh-huh, oh, okay.

(Dee Dee hangs up and goes back to filing her nails. Melanie and Jack approach Dee Dee.)

MELANIE: Dee Dee, who was that on the phone?

DEE DEE: Um, some guy.

JACK: (Annoyed.) Did this guy leave a name, number, anything?

DEE DEE: Umm, yeah, he said his name was something from, umm, that place we get supplies from.

MELANIE: W.E. Supply? Did they leave a message because they were supposed to deliver our supplies weeks ago?

DEE DEE: (*Checking her note.*) Um, they said soon.

JACK: Why didn't you get a specific date? We need those supplies. We've already postponed the tryouts for the summer program. Once we get started, we're going to have a really tight schedule.

DEE DEE: I guess I should have asked. Sorry. (*Shrugs and starts looking at a magazine while she blows bubbles with her gum.*)

MELANIE: (*To Jack.*) I don't know how much more of this I can take. I just can't work under these conditions.

JACK: You've been saying that for years. You know we do our best work under the worst conditions.

MELANIE: I wonder what the conditions are going to be now that Becky and Vicky own the theater.

JACK: I sure hope they plan to continue Ms. Evelyn's Summer of Shakespeare program. It's always so much fun. The high school kids love being onstage.

MELANIE: We should find out what their plans are soon. They're supposed to come here today. (*Becky and Vicky enter DSR.*) It will be good to see them again.

BECKY: It's good to see you, too. Hi, Melanie and Jack.

(*Becky is sincerely glad to see them. Vicky is standoffish. Melanie hugs Becky, Jack hugs Vicky, and then vice versa.*)

JACK: (*To Becky.*) You look great!

BECKY: Thanks! So do you.

(*After Jack and Becky hug, they point to each other and do a silly handshake. They both laugh. Vicky moves between them.*)

VICKY: (*To Becky, annoyed.*) Why do you always have to act so much like Mom?

MELANIE: (*Introducing.*) Dee Dee, you remember Evelyn's daughters, Becky and Victoria.

DEE DEE: (*Barely looking up from her magazine.*) Yeah, uh-huh.

(*Becky shrugs and starts to walk away.*)

BECKY: (*To Melanie, indicating Dee Dee.*) I see she hasn't changed.

MELANIE: Except for the worst. Everything is so unorganized around here. I sure wish you had taken the receptionist job when it

was available two years ago. It really broke your mom's heart that you didn't want to work for her.

VICKY: Yeah, Becky, why did you have to be so selfish?

(Dee Dee looks up and pays attention to the following exchange.)

BECKY: You're calling *me* selfish? You didn't even come home when Mom was in the hospital because you didn't want to lose the deposit on your cruise.

VICKY: She didn't want to see me anyway. You were always her favorite.

BECKY: *(Shouts.)* How can you say that? She never treated us any differently!

JACK: Ladies! Maybe we can talk about something less upsetting.

VICKY: Oh, be quiet. Who are you to tell me what to do? *(To Becky.)* I'm going to work on cleaning out Mom's office. We need to sort through all the junk in her filing cabinets.

BECKY: I'll be right in to help you.

VICKY: Don't bother. *(Storms off USR.)*

MELANIE: I see she hasn't changed.

JACK: It has always surprised me that she dislikes the theater so much. She's so dramatic!

BECKY: What can I say? She likes attention. I better go help her.

MELANIE: Before you go, we need to ask you about your plans for the theater.

BECKY: What do you want to know?

JACK: First of all, are you planning to continue the SOS program?

BECKY: Of course. I'd never cancel the Summer of Shakespeare program. It was Mom's favorite thing in the world.

JACK: That's a relief.

MELANIE: *(To Becky.)* It sure is. But we're going to have to get things started soon. We're already behind schedule and the director quit.

BECKY: I'm way ahead of you. I've already hired a new director. You may have heard of him...Larree Lawrence.

JACK: You're not serious?

BECKY: Yes. Is there a problem?

MELANIE: He doesn't have the best reputation. After his disco version of "Moby Dick," he was the laughingstock of most theater circles.

BECKY: He's done lots of other things. Most of them have been well received.

JACK: At least we have a director. When are we going to meet him?

BECKY: I asked him to stop by today to discuss our summer schedule.

MELANIE: (*Upset.*) I have my doubts about this whole situation. We're getting a late start. We're working with a strange director. We won't have Ms. Evelyn's calm presence to guide us. I just can't work under these conditions!

(*Melanie storms off SL. Becky and Jack watch her leave and try not to laugh.*)

BECKY: I see

BECKY/JACK: She hasn't changed! (*They laugh.*)

JACK: Well, you have changed. You really look terrific. I haven't seen you or talked to you since you worked here. That was the summer before you went to college, wasn't it?

BECKY: Yep. I can't believe that we both remembered that crazy handshake. Remember how Mom would laugh every time she saw us do it?

JACK: Yeah. She was a great lady. Things sure are going to be different around here now.

BECKY: Being here reminds me of her so much. She was so happy here.

JACK: She was. She made everybody else around here happy, too. I'd never want to work anywhere else.

BECKY: I'm so glad to hear that. Do you know if Melanie is also planning to stay?

JACK: I don't think you could drag her away from here. She loves it even though she sometimes acts like she doesn't.

BECKY: I just hope that I can run the theater as well as Mom did.

JACK: So you're planning to take over her job?

BECKY: I really don't have much choice. I can't let anything happen to this wonderful old theater.

JACK: But what about your other job?

BECKY: It was easy to leave a receptionist job to take a theater administration job, especially one this close to my heart.

JACK: You aren't leaving anyone special behind?

BECKY: Actually, no. I haven't met anyone special in a long time.
What about you?

JACK: My life is pretty much the way it was ten years ago when I started working here. I wouldn't have been able to make it through college without this job. I owe so much to your mom.

BECKY: I do, too. That's why I better go help Vicky clean out Mom's office.

JACK: What does that mean?

(Becky looks around and pulls Jack DSC, away from Dee Dee, who is totally engrossed in her magazine.)

BECKY: I guess I can tell you. In her will, Mom left the theater to Vicky and me, but that's not all. She also left a letter telling us that she hid a large sum of money somewhere in the theater. *(Dee Dee looks up and strains to listen.)* If Vicky finds it first, then I'll never be able to buy the theater.

JACK: *(Loudly.)* Buy the theater?!

BECKY: Shhhh!

JACK: *(Softly.)* Buy the theater? How much money are we talking about? And why would you want to buy the theater?

BECKY: Mom said that she had saved \$70,000 dollars.

JACK: Wow!

BECKY: And that her dying wish was to keep the theater alive.

(Dee Dee looks down and writes some notes.)

JACK: What does all of this have to do with helping Vicky clean out your mom's office?

(Molly enters DSR, stands just inside the entrance, and overhears the end of the next line. She carries a clipboard and pen.)

BECKY: I'm afraid that if Vicky finds the money first, she'll keep it to herself. Then I'll never be able to buy the theater.

MOLLY: You're planning to buy the theater?

BECKY: Who are you?

(Vicky enters USR and joins Becky and Jack. Molly approaches them.)

MOLLY: I'm Molly Bitters, your landlord.

(Molly hands Becky a business card.)

BECKY: What are you doing here?

MOLLY: I came to meet the new owner. I assume that would be you.

BECKY: You're half right. My sister and I own this theater now that my mother is gone.

MOLLY: Well, then, I need to speak to both of you.

VICKY: What do you want?

MOLLY: I need to inform you about the conditions of your lease. Your father, Charles, rented this building from my father, Stanley, for 20 years. The contract he signed includes an exclusive option to buy the building for \$75,000. When the contract expires, the landlord can sell the building to anyone who is interested for any price he or she chooses. Your mother never showed any interest in buying this building, so I assumed that I'd be able to sell it when your contract expires.

BECKY: *(Worried.)* When is that?

MOLLY: July 31st.

VICKY: *(Excited.)* Of this year?

MOLLY: That's right.

BECKY: Who would want this old building anyway? It can't be used for anything other than a theater.

MOLLY: Actually, I have an interested buyer.

VICKY: Who?

MOLLY: Her name is Carmen Roche.

BECKY: *(With growing anxiety.)* What does she want with our theater?

MOLLY: She's already bought all of the other buildings on this block. She plans to tear down all of these old buildings and construct a luxury hotel.

BECKY: *(Upset.)* She can't tear down our theater to build a Roach Motel.

JACK: *(Puts his hand on her shoulder.)* Don't worry, Becky. We'll work something out.

BECKY: Will you stay out of this?

JACK: Sorry, I was just trying to help. *(Starts to exit SL, looks back at Becky, and then exits.)*

VICKY: There's nothing to work out. We obviously don't have the money to buy the theater, so we'll just have to start packing everything up so we can be out of here by the end of July.

BECKY: Now, just wait a minute. Let me set the record straight once and for all. My mother's dying wish was for us to buy this theater, and I am going to do everything I can to make that happen. Ms. Bitters, I think you better leave.

MOLLY: Whatever you want. Just remember, if you don't have the money by July 31st, I'm going to sell this building to Ms. Roche.

(Molly starts to exit DSR. Vicky grabs Molly's business card from Becky and waves it in the air.)

VICKY: We'll be in touch.

(Before Molly exits, she gives Dee Dee a knowing glance.)

MOLLY: I'm sure you will. *(Exits.)*

BECKY: *(To Vicky.)* What do you mean we'll be in touch?

VICKY: You don't honestly think that you're going to be able to raise \$5,000 by the end of the month, do you? That's assuming we find the hidden money.

BECKY: I'm sure I can get the money somehow.

(Vicky glances over at Dee Dee, who is looking into a mirror and putting on makeup.)

VICKY: What if you don't find Mom's money in time?

BECKY: You mean what if I don't find it before you do.

VICKY: Are you really going to spend all of that money on this dump?

BECKY: It's not a dump. It's Mom's dream, and I happen to share that dream.

VICKY: Well, I don't. I need to finish going through Mom's filing cabinets.

(Vicky heads USSR. Becky is right behind her.)

BECKY: I think I'll help you.

(Vicky and Becky continue to bicker as they exit USR. Dee Dee goes to the office door and tries to eavesdrop. Larree enters DSR, wearing flamboyant 1970s clothes and carrying a briefcase and several other bags. He goes CS and drops his bags loudly. Startled, Dee Dee turns and screams.)

DEE DEE: *(To Larree.)* Who are you?

LARREE: I'm [Larree]... *[Pronounced "Larry."]* ...but not Larry...
(Spells.) ...L-A-R-R-Y. My name is spelled... *(Spells.)* ...L-A-R-R-E-E. The extra "E" is for extra "ME."

DEE DEE: *(Blank look.)* Oh...okay...what are you doing here?

LARREE: I'm the director. Surely, you've heard of me...Larree Lawrence.

DEE DEE: Yeah, right. If you'll excuse me. *(Hurries to SL exit.)*

LARREE: *(Looking after her, shocked.)* How rude!

(Becky and Vicky enter USR.)

BECKY: You must be Larree Lawrence.

LARREE: The one and only!

VICKY: *(Sizing him up.)* Thank goodness for that.

(Larree and Becky give Vicky a mean look.)

BECKY: *(To Larree.)* I'm glad you're here. It's an honor to work with such a well-known director.

LARREE: Of course, you feel that way. No one is as talented as I am.

VICKY: Maybe you should find another job that can really use your talents. I'm afraid that we aren't going to be in business much longer.

BECKY: *(To Larree.)* Ignore her. Richmond Theater is going to be around for a long, long time.

LARREE: Okaaaay. So tell me more about this SOS program. We didn't have much time to discuss it over the phone.

BECKY: It's a program my mother started 15 years ago. We choose one Shakespeare play to stage each summer, and we cast it with students from the local high school.

LARREE: Super duper! I love working with today's youth!

BECKY: The play we've chosen this year is "Romeo and Juliet."

LARREE: Fabulous! I've always wanted to update that play. (*Thinks. Pause.*) How about a disco version? I just love disco. People still talk about my disco version of "Moby Dick."

BECKY: You're right about that, but I'm not sure that disco is the way we want to go with this production. Remember that you're going to be working with teenagers. They might not even know what disco is.

LARREE: That's all right. I've got lots of other ideas. We could do—

BECKY: Right now, I think we should concentrate on casting. I've arranged for the interested students to come in tomorrow to audition for you.

LARREE: Terrific! I better start preparing the scenes. Where is my office?

BECKY: (*Points SL.*) It's down that hall, third door on the left.

(*Larree picks up his bags and starts to exit SL.*)

LARREE: This is going to be great. It's good to be working with Shakespeare again. In fact, it's good to be working at all. (*Grandiose bow.*) Thank you for this lovely opportunity. (*Exits.*)

VICKY: (*To Becky.*) I'm sure he won't last long, but that won't matter after July 31st.

BECKY: (*Trying to stay calm.*) I'm not going to keep arguing with you about this. I am going to do Summer of Shakespeare, and I am going to find the money to buy this theater somehow.

VICKY: That's what *you* think.

BECKY: You just try to stop me.

VICKY: If that's the way you want it.

BECKY: It's exactly the way I want it.

VICKY: Fine!

BECKY: Fine!

(*Vicky storms out DSR. Becky shrugs and looks dismayed. After a brief pause, Larree enters SL.*)

LARREE: (*Excited.*) This play is going to be absolutely fabulous. I've just jotted down a few ideas for the show. (*Holds up a clipboard with a page completely filled with writing.*) I'd love to chat with you about them.

BECKY: (*Unsure.*) Sure. I bet you have some great ideas.

(Larree and Becky exit SL. Dee Dee enters. Dee Dee looks around, takes out her cell phone, and calls Molly.)

DEE DEE: *(Speaks in a Jersey accent without sounding dingy. Into cell phone.)* Molly? Have I got some gossip for you! After you left, Becky and Vicky started arguing about keeping the theater or selling it. They obviously don't like each other very much...Uh-huh. Also, I overheard Becky telling the set designer that Mrs. Evelyn hid \$70,000 somewhere in the theater. If I can find that money, there will be no way for Becky to buy the theater...Right. It looks like this is going to be easier than we thought. I'm going to keep trying to interfere with the theater supply shipments. I'm also gonna talk to Vicky. She might be willing to help us...Yeah. We're going to be rich by August! *(Hangs up and walks back to her desk as the lights fade to black and the curtain closes.)*

Scene 3

(AT RISE: July 9, rehearsal room. Ten chairs are set up in rows in front of the SL wall. There is a sign on Dee Dee's desk that reads, "Summer of Shakespeare! Sign in here for "Romeo and Juliet" auditions." Dee Dee is sitting at her desk reading a magazine. Blair and Crystal enter DSR and go to Dee Dee's desk to sign in. They stand for a while looking at Dee Dee, who ignores them. Blair and Crystal continue to wait but Dee Dee keeps ignoring them. Finally, Blair clears her throat.)

DEE DEE: (Looks up.) Oooh! Are you here to sign up for the Summer of Shakespeare program?

BLAIR: Crystal told me about this program, and being the most talented girl in town, it is my obligation to join.

CRYSTAL: Blair, I just know you're going to get the lead role... (Sighs.) ...Juliet.

BLAIR: (Excited.) I know! I can't wait to see who my Romeo is going to be! What role do you want?

CRYSTAL: I could be the Nurse. She's funny.

BLAIR: Yes, and she works for Juliet. We could be a team onstage and off!

CRYSTAL: That would be great!

DEE DEE: Yeah, well, don't get your hopes up. This whole summer program might not even work out this year.

BLAIR: (To Crystal.) What does she mean? I have to be Juliet.

CRYSTAL: (To Dee Dee.) What do you mean?

DEE DEE: Now that Mrs. Evelyn's gone, her daughters might not want to continue the program.

BLAIR: Where are they? Are they here? Let me talk to them and straighten this whole thing out.

DEE DEE: I don't know where they are. Look, I'm just saying that since we're getting off to a late start, and so many things have changed, this summer program might not work out. That's all I'm saying.

(Crystal leads Blair over to the chairs.)

CRYSTAL: It's all right, Blair. I'm sure everything is going to work out.

(Dustin and Eric enter DSR, laughing and being loud. Dustin goes to Dee Dee's desk to sign in. Eric follows.)

DUSTIN: *(To Eric.)* Dude! I'm having this awesome party. You've got to come!

ERIC: When is it?

DUSTIN: This Saturday. My parents are going out of town and they decided that I'm old enough to stay home by myself.

ERIC: Cool! Who's going to be there?

DUSTIN: Anybody who's anybody. We'll invite the hot chicks who show up for these auditions.

(Blair and Crystal start to approach Dustin and Eric but Blair stops CS.)

BLAIR: *(To Dustin and Eric.)* Did I hear you say you were going to have a party?

DUSTIN: Yeah. We were just about to invite you and Crystal. Can you come? It's this Saturday.

BLAIR: What do you think, Crystal? Should I honor them with my presence?

CRYSTAL: I don't see why not. It sounds like fun.

BLAIR: *(To Dustin.)* Who else is going to be there?

DUSTIN: You know, the regular crowd. Eric and I are going to start calling people tonight.

ERIC: *(To Blair.)* Yeah. We'll be able to invite some of the people when we see them today.

CRYSTAL: You're not planning to invite everyone who comes to these auditions, are you?

DUSTIN: It depends.

ERIC: *(Remembers.)* Oh, yeah! Guess what?

DUSTIN: What?

ERIC: Bert is going to try out.

(Dustin and Eric laugh out loud.)

DUSTIN: How do you know that?

ERIC: His sister told me when I was talking to her on the phone last night.

(Bert enters SR. He is dressed like a nerd and talks with a nasally voice. He signs in at Dee Dee's desk.)

CRYSTAL: *(Points at Bert.)* Look! There's Bert now.

BLAIR: *(Looks over, disgusted.)* Ick!

(Bert approaches Crystal, Blair, Dustin, and Eric. Bert Looks down as he talks and then at the audience. Other Students move and sit in the chairs and ignore him. Throughout this speech, girls put on makeup and giggle about gossip, guys mess with girls and talk to each other about the party, etc.)

BERT: Hello, fellow actors. I'm glad to share this auspicious occasion with you. I had countless misfortunes getting to auditions today. For a while, the quest looked futile. You see, my mom was going to come home from work to bring me over here, but she called me and said that she was too busy and couldn't get away. So I called my dad at the lab but his line was busy. Then I thought I might ride my bike, even though it is a lengthy distance, because I really wanted to come. *(Todd enters SR and signs in.)* Luckily for me, my neighbor just happened to come home, so I went over and asked her if she would mind bringing me. *(Dustin and Eric start walking over to Todd.)* Normally, she doesn't even talk to me, but I guess she could tell that it was very important and that I wouldn't take no for an answer—

DUSTIN: Hey, Todd! I didn't know that you were going to tryout.

(Dustin and Eric greet Todd like he's an old friend. Bert realizes that no one is listening to him, so he shrugs and sits down.)

TODD: *(Surprised at the greeting from Dustin and Eric.)* Hi. I didn't know you would be here either or that you would even talk to me if you were here. You never talk to me at school.

ERIC: Hey, us jocks have to stick together.

TODD: Jocks?

DUSTIN: You're the captain of the golf team, right?

TODD: Yeah, but—

DUSTIN: Well, that's a big job. It's just as important as being the starting quarterback for the varsity football team.

ERIC: *(To Todd.)* Or the highest scoring center for the basketball team—

DUSTIN/ERIC: *(Shout.)* Not!

(Dustin and Eric shove Todd's shoulders and mess up his hair as he tries to get away from them and sit down.)

ERIC: *(To Dustin.)* For a minute, there, he thought we were really going to be his friend!

DUSTIN: In his dreams! *(Looks around.)* Not much of a crowd here today. I hope some more people show up. Other than Blair and Crystal, there's no one here I'd want anywhere near my party.

ERIC: Yeah.

(Dustin and Eric continue talking and laughing. Grace enters SR and signs in.)

GRACE: *(To Dee Dee.)* I'm so glad that this year's play is "Romeo and Juliet." I've loved that play since I was a little girl and my mom would read it to me. I've seen all the different movie versions and three different live productions. I hope I get a good part.

DEE DEE: Don't get your hopes up, honey. This summer is off to a bad start, and we might not even get to do this Summer of Shakespeare thing.

GRACE: Don't say that. Things always work out when you're doing a show...like magic. The show must go on!

DEE DEE: Whatever you say.

(Grace goes to sit down. Dustin and Eric taunt her as she does and she ignores them.)

CRYSTAL: *(To Grace.)* You're that new girl, aren't you?

GRACE: Yes. I transferred the last week of school.

BLAIR: Why did you come to these auditions?

GRACE: I just heard about this program, and I love theater. I've always wanted to act in a Shakespeare play, but I've never had the opportunity.

CRYSTAL: Really. What part do you want to play?

GRACE: I'd be happy with any part, but I would love to play Juliet.

CRYSTAL: Then I guess you don't know that Blair, here, is the best actress in this town. I hope you don't have your heart set on playing Juliet because she is going to get that part.

BLAIR: (*Airhead pose and tone. As Juliet.*) "Like, Romeo-Romeo, like, where are you?"

CRYSTAL: (*To Grace.*) As you can see, we have a very beautiful and popular Juliet.

GRACE: (*Sarcastically.*) Well, I look forward to the competition.

(*Liz enters DSR, carrying a backpack. Nervous, Liz dumps the contents of her backpack on Dee Dee's desk and frantically searches for her daily planner.*)

LIZ: Where is it? It was right here! (*Overly excited and relieved.*) Here it is! It's today!

DEE DEE: Do you want a separate desk for all that stuff?

LIZ: No, that's okay.

DEE DEE: I guess you're here for the auditions?

LIZ: Right. I'm at the right place at the right time, right?

DEE DEE: Sure, whatever. Listen, you seem to have enough stress in your life. You might want to rethink trying out for this play. Chances are the theater is going to close before the summer program is over.

LIZ: If that happens, I'll deal with it then. Right now, I'm trying to remember the lines I learned for the audition.

DEE DEE: But you don't know what parts he's going to ask you to read.

LIZ: I know, but I wanted to be prepared, so I memorized as many important lines as I could. Do you have a minute? (*Starts digging in her backpack again, finds a script, and hands it to Dee Dee.*) I need a prompter.

(*Dee Dee hands the script back to Liz.*)

DEE DEE: I really don't have time. Why don't you ask one of the other kids?

LIZ: That's a good idea. Thanks. (*Repacks her backpack and purse and sits down next to Grace. To Grace.*) Hi, do you have a minute? You see, I've been learning as many lines as I can from this play, and—

(Larree enters SL, holding a Diet Coke, prances to CS, and claps his hands. Dee Dee exits into Evelyn's office.)

LARREE: Okay, everyone! Calm down! Welcome to Summer of Shakespeare here at the fabulous Richmond Theater. I'm sure that you are as excited about working on "Romeo and Juliet" as I am.

BLAIR: Yes. I'm sure we all are. Let me save you some time. There's no need to hold auditions for the part of Juliet because I'm sure that you will want me to play that part.

CRYSTAL: *(To Larree.)* That's right. She was the lead in the last three plays at school.

LARREE: Oh, and just who is this star in our midst?

BLAIR: My name is Blair Hamilton.

CRYSTAL: *(To Larree.)* It's a name to remember. By the way, who are you?

LARREE: I was just about to introduce myself before I was so rudely interrupted. I'm Larree, but not Larry... *(Spells.)* ...L-A-R-R-Y. My name is spelled... *(Spells.)* ...L-A-R-R-E-E. The extra "E" is for extra "ME."

DUSTIN: *(To Eric.)* Good grief!

LARREE: Relax and have a latte. *(Takes a sip of his Diet Coke.)* But like I was saying, we'll be doing "Romeo and Juliet." Auditions for parts will be—

(Dustin rises and shows off.)

DUSTIN: There's no need. We all know who Romeo will be.

(Eric rises.)

ERIC: Hey! What about me? I'm dashing handsome. *(Shows off.)* I can be Romeo.

DUSTIN: No way, man. I'm Romeo. I've had more acting experience than you.

(Dustin and Eric stand and start to push each other around.)

LARREE: *(Separating Dustin and Eric.)* Now! Now! *(Big hand motions.)* Don't make me open a can of beat down on you two.

ERIC: *(To Dustin.)* Yeah, that would be some serious acting.

LARREE: (*To group.*) All right, let's try this again. The third time's the charm. This year we are doing "Romeo and Juliet." However, I've had a vision. I think "Romeo and Juliet" needs to be more exciting. I picture it set in New Orleans, and instead of a masquerade ball, we'll have a Mardi Gras ball. Just think of it...the balcony scene will be just perfect set in the French Quarter with all of those iron balconies. Don't you think it will be just marvelous?

BERT: Oh, that sounds great! We can all wear elaborate costumes!

LARREE: Exactly! I think we need a theme like one of the Mardi Gras balls.

BERT: I wanted to attend the festivities last year, but I couldn't find anybody to go with.

BLAIR: I wonder why...

CRYSTAL: For sure...

DUSTIN: (*To Larree.*) No one in their right mind would do Shakespeare like this.

ERIC: (*To Larree.*) Yeah!

LIZ: (*Getting hysterical. To Larree.*) Are you going to change the lines, too? I don't know how I'm supposed to learn new lines. I've been working for months to learn all of the lines for all of the female parts in this play. I don't know what I'm going to do!

LARREE: (*To group.*) Okay, listen! It's my way, or the highway. I don't know why you people don't appreciate my vision. You can't see things like I do because you are blind. You people are artistically impaired.

BLAIR: This is my only chance to be in this program, and I'm not going to let you ruin it.

CRYSTAL: (*To Larree.*) For sure.

DUSTIN: (*To Larree.*) We don't want some new director messing up our last play here.

ERIC: (*To Larree.*) Yeah!

LARREE: (*To group.*) I don't know what I was thinking when I took this job. I thought I would like working with young people because you are supposed to be open-minded. I guess I was wrong.

GRACE: I think it's a good idea. People are always updating Shakespeare's plays. His characters and storylines are timeless. Different versions help us relate to his plays better.

BLAIR: Who made you a Shakespeare expert?

CRYSTAL: For sure.

GRACE: (*To Blair.*) You want to be Juliet, right?

BLAIR: Of course.

GRACE: If we set the play in New Orleans with a Mardi Gras theme, Juliet will probably be the queen of the ball. She will be able to wear a crown.

BLAIR: (*Excited.*) I could wear a crown! Did you hear that, Crystal? I could wear a crown!

CRYSTAL: Like, wow! That would be perfect.

GRACE: I think it's a pretty good idea. (*To group.*) Does anyone else agree with me?

(*Others adlib "I guess so," "Yeah," "Sure," "Okay," etc.*)

LARREE: (*To Grace.*) Thank you! And what is your name?

GRACE: My name is Grace.

LARREE: You obviously know something about theater. I look forward to exchanging ideas with you. (*To group.*) Well, now that we've settled that, there are a few other things we need to discuss. There are not enough actors here to play all of the roles in the play, so girls may need to play boys' roles and some people will have multiple roles.

DUSTIN: (*Cocky.*) That's no problem. I'll play as many parts as you want.

ERIC: (*To Larree.*) Yeah. Me, too.

LARREE: Also, we are going to condense some of the play. We won't perform every single scene.

LIZ: Great! That means I won't have to learn so many lines!

BLAIR: (*To Larree.*) As long as you don't cut any of *my* lines.

CRYSTAL: (*To Larree.*) For sure.

LARREE: (*Claps hands.*) All right, everybody. Are you ready? (*Students respond enthusiastically.*) Then let's go! I need all of the boys to come with me for their auditions. Girls, you can stay here or go into one of the empty offices down this hall.

(*Guys stand up and start to exit SL.*)

DUSTIN: (*To Todd.*) Hey, dude. I didn't even know you were still here.

ERIC: (*To Todd.*) Yeah, man. You haven't said a word.

TODD: Whatever.

(Guys exit. Blair looks at Grace and Liz.)

BLAIR: *(To Crystal, indicating Grace and Liz.)* I wonder if those two really think they have a chance.

CRYSTAL: I'm sure they do. They'll just have to be disappointed.
(Mean giggle.)

BLAIR: Who is that Grace girl? Have you ever seen her at school?

CRYSTAL: Only once. She had on this awful green sweater. It was so last season.

BLAIR: Maybe we should give her a subscription to "Vogue"! *(Mean giggle.)*

CRYSTAL: For sure. *(Mean giggle.)*

LIZ: *(To Grace.)* I wonder what lines he's going to make us read for our audition. I'm so nervous. Would you run some lines with me?

GRACE: Sure. I'd be glad to, but... *(Looks at Blair and Crystal.)*
...let's go somewhere a little quieter.

(Liz and Grace exit SL.)

BLAIR: *(To Crystal, looking at her hands.)* You know, my nail polish is beginning to chip. I really need to schedule a manicure. Do you have a nail file?

(Crystal digs around in her purse.)

CRYSTAL: No, I don't think so.

BLAIR: Maybe we should go ask Grace and Liz if they have one.

BLAIR/CRYSTAL: *(Shout.)* Not!

CRYSTAL: I bet there's one in that desk over there. I'll go look for you.

BLAIR: Hurry, I don't want to audition like this. *(Crystal looks in Dee Dee's desk and accidentally pulls the whole drawer out.)* You're so clumsy, Crystal. I have to do everything for you.

(Blair gets up to help Crystal fix the desk drawer when Dee Dee enters.)

DEE DEE: What in the name of Mary Kay are you doing?

BLAIR: You like Mary Kay, too?

CRYSTAL: *(To Dee Dee.)* I'm sorry. We were looking for a nail file. Just look at Blair's nails!

DEE DEE: *(Looks at Blair's nails, horrified.)* Oh! Well, girls, why didn't you say something?

(Dee Dee proceeds to pull out makeup, a wallet, a brush, and everything else from her purse, which is sitting on her desk. She finally comes across a nail file.)

BLAIR: You are so, like, my hero. Thank you. Thank you.

(Blair and Crystal do a happy little dance.)

CRYSTAL: Let's go check our makeup in the bathroom.

BLAIR: Good idea.

(Crystal and Blair exit SL. Molly and Carmen enter DSR and go CS.)

MOLLY: *(To Carmen.)* See, what did I tell you about this theater? It's a complete dump. So when should I give the rats the eviction notice, huh, Carmen? *(Slaps Carmen on the back.)*

CARMEN: If you haven't forgotten, we don't own the building yet. You were supposed to get it from the previous owner. What happened?

MOLLY: She died before I could talk her into it. Then she gave the theater to her two daughters. Don't worry, you'll own the building by the end of July.

CARMEN: And what if they buy the building before then, Ms. Bitters?

MOLLY: Don't worry. They won't get \$75,000 before then. They're not even close, and they only have one production before then. It's in the bag, or should I say...the *dumpster*.

CARMEN: And what about this hidden money I've heard about?

MOLLY: Hey, how'd you know about that?

(Carmen sighs and points to Dee Dee, who is doing something goofy.)

CARMEN: I hired your informant, remember?

MOLLY: Oh, yeah.

(Becky and Vicky enter USR and go CS.)

BECKY: *(To Molly.)* May I help you? Oh, it's you again. What do you want?

MOLLY: I'm just the friendly landlord showing a possible buyer your theater. *(Introducing.)* Beck, Vick, this is Ms. Roche. She's interested in buying the theater.

BECKY: *(To Carmen.)* Oh, you're Ms. Roche. Why do you want to tear down this lovely old theater?

CARMEN: It's *Roche*, darling, study your French, and age is the exact reason I'm tearing down this old theater. It's obsolete. My hotel will be state of the art. *(Dramatic hand gestures.)* "Roche Luxury Suites...So wonderful it traps your senses."

VICKY: Brilliant! I'll be your first customer.

BECKY: *(Loud gasp.)* Victoria! You've got Mother spinning in her grave!

MOLLY: Well, I'm glad your sister is the brains of this operation.

BECKY: We'll have the money, and we'll buy the theater. You just wait.

(Larree and the Boys enter. The Boys sit down and find stage business.)

LARREE: *(To Molly and Carmen.)* Good day, ladies. Would you like to meet the future generation of Hollywood?

(Larree points to Boys. Eric takes a bow and Ladies scoff.)

CARMEN: No, I thought Hollywood had class, unlike this piece of...
(Looks around.) ...history.

LARREE: Becky, Vicky, we need to talk.

MOLLY: Let's move on then. *(To Vicky and Becky.)* Girls, be sure to be in touch by the end of the month.

VICKY: *(To Carmen and Molly.)* Nice chatting with you, ladies.

CARMEN: *(To Vicky and Becky.)* Good luck, darlings, I'm sure your attempts will be ambitious and admirable.

(Carmen and Molly exit DSR.)

BECKY: What is it, Larree?

LARREE: Becky, I need to talk to the set and costume designer. I left notes in their offices, and they never answered them. They're so inconsiderate! They just don't understand the pressure I'm under.

VICKY: Whatever.

BECKY: *(To Larree.)* The reason they haven't answered your notes is that they're running an important errand. We haven't gotten our theater supplies, so they are looking into it for me.

VICKY: *(To Larree.)* They'll be back later. What's the big rush?

BECKY: *(To Larree.)* I'll send them to talk to you when they get back.

LARREE: That won't work. I'll be in the middle of auditions. Maybe this afternoon.

BECKY: Okay, Larree. I'll try to arrange a meeting for this afternoon.

VICKY: Why bother? You know we aren't even going to do this show.

BECKY: Yes, we are, and it's going to be successful, too. I don't care what you or anyone else says. We are going to find the money to buy this theater and keep Mom's dream alive.

VICKY: Fine. *(Exits into Evelyn's office.)*

LARREE: *(Looking around.)* All right, where are the girls? *(Exits SL.)*

BECKY: Dee Dee, when Jack and Melanie get back, tell them to meet me in Mom's office. I need to talk to them and so does Larree.

DEE DEE: I will if I can remember.

BECKY: You better remember. It's important. *(Exits USR.)*

DUSTIN: Hey, Eric, let's go watch the girls audition!

ERIC: Yeah!

(Dustin and Eric exit SL.)

BERT: *(To Todd.)* Do you know where the facilities are?

TODD: Right next to the water fountain. I'll show you.

(Bert and Todd exit SL. Jack and Melanie enter DSR.)

JACK: *(Calls.)* Becky, we're back.

MELANIE: No thanks to your driving, Jack.

JACK: What are you complaining about? You're alive, aren't you?

MELANIE: Yeah, but you drive like a maniac.

JACK: Yeah, well, you drive like my grandmother, but I don't complain.

(Becky enters USR.)

BECKY: Melanie, Jack, I'm glad you're here. I need to talk to you about Larree's costumes and sets for his version of "Romeo and Juliet."

JACK: That's great because we kind of need to talk to you, too.

BECKY: Oh, really? What's going on then?

MELANIE: We think that, umm...

JACK: (*To Becky.*) What Melanie's trying to say is, basically, we think that Larree's a few—

MELANIE: (*To Becky.*) He's nuts! Absolutely, positively, undeniably insane!

JACK: (*To Becky.*) I was going to say he's a few cards short of a full deck, but Melanie pretty much summed it up.

BECKY: His ideas are abnormal, I'll give you that, but I would definitely not say insane.

JACK: Maybe from your perspective, but I mean, come on. How are we supposed to create ten different sets? You know Shakespeare staged this play without a set.

MELANIE: (*To Becky.*) He must think he's got a billion dollars for the costumes. Have you seen what he wants? If I see one more kind of fur on the fabric list, I'm going to become an animal rights activist.

BECKY: Okay, okay, okay. I'll talk to him about it.

JACK: (*Frustrated.*) You better...because if you don't, we will, and I guarantee we are going to give him the short, sweet, no-holds-barred version of what we think of him and his ideas.

BECKY: Why don't we go to Mom's office and discuss exactly what you think I should tell Larree. We can't talk to him right now. He's busy.

MELANIE: Okay, but something's got to change. I can't work under these conditions!

(*Melanie and Jack exit USR.*)

BECKY: Dee Dee, will you tell me when Larree finishes with the auditions?

DEE DEE: Yeah, sure, whatever.

(*Becky exits USR. Eric, Burt, Dustin, and Todd enter SL.*)

ERIC: How about that new script? This is gonna be one strange play.

BERT: Actually, I thought it was great. Its use of allusion and geographical placement really enhanced the quality of the dialect, especially the soliloquy I delivered.

DUSTIN: Shut up, soliloqueer.

ERIC: *(To Bert.)* Yeah.

BERT: All I'm saying is that I'll be content even with a small part in such an introspective play.

ERIC: Don't worry, you're the smallest part here among us.

TODD: Eric, leave him alone.

DUSTIN: Stay out of this, Todd.

TODD: No, stop bothering him.

ERIC: Man, get a life!

DUSTIN: Yeah, hoo-hah, play football.

ERIC: He's too small from playing golf.

(Larree enters. He is followed by the Girls, who all go to their chairs and sit down. Larree gives everyone a Shakespeare T-shirt. From now until the "Romeo and Juliet" performance, the SOS Actors will wear their Shakespeare shirts with jeans or other casual pants.)

TODD: *(To Dustin and Eric.)* Why don't you guys grow up?

LARREE: *(To group.)* Okay, people. I know you are all dying to know which parts you will be playing. I have to think about your auditions, and I will let you know tomorrow. Be here at nine o'clock so I can announce your parts and then we can read through the whole play. See you tomorrow. *(Students get up and adlib conversation as they exit DSR. Larree approaches Dee Dee, who is filing her nails. To Dee Dee.)* Do you know where everybody is? I'm supposed to meet with the set and costume designers. I told Becky I wanted to meet after I finished auditions.

DEE DEE: *(Points to Evelyn's office without looking up.)* They're all in there.

(Larree approaches Evelyn's office.)

LARREE: *(Yells.)* Hello in there! I thought we had a meeting!

(Becky enters followed by Jack and Melanie. They meet Larree CS.)

BECKY: Dee Dee, didn't I ask you to tell me when Larree was finished with auditions?

DEE DEE: Yeah. (*Exits DSL.*)

BECKY: Well, then, why didn't you...oh, never mind. Look, Larree, Jack and Melanie have some concerns about the sets and costumes.

LARREE: So do I. That's why I want to talk to you. How am I ever going to explain what I want if I never see the people I work with? (*To Jack.*) Hi, I'm Larree.

(*Larree and Jack shake hands.*)

JACK: I know.

LARREE: And you must be Melanie.

(*Larree and Melanie shake hands.*)

MELANIE: Right. Look, about all of that fur, do you really think it's necessary. It's very expensive and—

LARREE: Oh, it's absolutely necessary. Remember, we're trying to create *magic*.

JACK: Well, that must be what you expect. How am I supposed to create ten different sets? The supplies for one of the sets you want would cost more than we would make on the whole summer program.

BECKY: (*To Larree.*) Maybe we should talk about money. Larree, I'm pretty sure I told you that we are on a really tight budget.

LARREE: It's been my experience that when you expect more, you get more. The money for what I want is somewhere. I'm sure it'll all work out. It always does.

JACK: What is your problem? Are you deaf? We're trying to tell you that there is no money.

MELANIE: (*To Larree.*) We always make do with what we have. That's the way things work around here.

BECKY: (*To Larree.*) We may be able to get some of the things you want, but you are going to have to scale down your ideas.

LARREE: This is unacceptable. I wish I had known all of this before I took the job. Do you really expect me to stay if I can't stage the type of play I want?

JACK: Where else would you go?

MELANIE: *(To Larree.)* Yeah. The job opportunities aren't exactly pouring in from what I've heard.

LARREE: I admit I've had a bit of a dry spell, but that's to be expected in this sort of job. It's not me...it's the industry.

BECKY: You have to admit I took a risk when I hired you.

LARREE: What is that supposed to mean?

BECKY: "Disco Moby Dick" was not exactly a critical success.

LARREE: Did you people plan this attack? Do you want me to leave, because if that's what you want, you've got it!

BECKY: Larree, we don't want you to leave, but we are going to have to work together. Some of your ideas are going to have to change. We can work with some of them, but we just don't have the money for all of them.

LARREE: Fine. I'll see what I can change. Jack, Melanie, let's go talk in my office.

JACK: Okay.

MELANIE: *(To Larree.)* All right.

(Larree, Jack, and Melanie exit SL. Becky shrugs and exits into Evelyn's office as the lights fade to black.)

Scene 4

(AT RISE: July 10, rehearsal room. Dee Dee is sitting at her desk reading a magazine. Blair and Crystal enter.)

BLAIR: (To Crystal.) You have to come by my house. When my mother heard we were going to do "Romeo and Juliet," she bought me, like, the most beautiful dress since, of course, I'm going to be Juliet. She said she would never let any of her children wear... (Disgusted sigh.) ...stage costumes!

(Blair and Crystal sit in their seats.)

CRYSTAL: Right. You never know who has worn them before.

(Grace and Liz enter DSR.)

CRYSTAL/BLAIR: Uuuuugh!

(Grace and Liz approach.)

BLAIR: (To Crystal, indicating Grace.) Look at Miss Self-Assured!

CRYSTAL: I'm sure she thinks she's going to get a good part.

BLAIR: I guess she'll just have to be disappointed. (To Grace.) Oh, hi. We were just talking about—

GRACE: I heard what you were talking about.

(Grace sits. Liz sits by Grace.)

LIZ: Oh, I am soooo nervous. I don't think I can wait for him to tell me what part I'm going to play. (Taps her fingers and fidgets in her chair.)

GRACE: If you don't mind my asking, why did you even sign up for this program if it makes you so nervous?

LIZ: Well, I had to find something to do over the summer, and I thought this would be fun. Oh, I think I'm going to be sick...

(Grace shrugs. Bert, Dustin, Todd, and Eric enter DSR.)

BERT: *(To Dustin, Todd, and Eric. Whining.)* Geez, you guys. Why didn't you hold the door for me? You know, that really hurt. I think you guys broke my nose. My mom's going to be really mad at you guys.

DUSTIN: *(Mockingly.)* Oh, I'm sorry Bert. Should I call your wittle mommy-wommy for you, or do you think you're going to be okay for a wittle bit longer?

(Bert walks away from them holding his nose.)

TODD: *(To Dustin and Eric.)* Don't you guys ever let up?

(Todd approaches Bert.)

ERIC: *(To Todd.)* Whatever! *(To Dustin.)* Man, I can't wait to see what part I got!

DUSTIN: *(Cocky.)* I can. I already know I'll be Romeo.

ERIC: Hey, my mom and my big sister say I'm gonna be a heartbreaker when I grow up. I might be Romeo.

DUSTIN: Maybe when you lose your acne and halitosis.

ERIC: *(Embarrassed, trying to hide it.)* Hey, Dustin, I think Bert and Ernie, here, should audition for "Sesame Street."

DUSTIN: Maybe we should put them in a trashcan with the Cookie Monster.

(Eric and Dustin laugh. Larree enters, carrying scripts.)

LARREE: *(To group.)* All right! All right! Everyone, sit down so I can tell you your parts. Remember, there are no small parts...only small budgets. *(Looks at Evelyn's office and shrugs.)* Anyway, for the part of our leading lady, Juliet, I have decided that I shall cast...Grace Howard.

(Blair rises.)

BLAIR: *(Shouts.)* What?! If she's Juliet, then who am I? There's no other part for me.

LARREE: Yes, Ms. Hamilton, there is a part for you. You will be Lady Capulet, and your dear friend, Ms. Bradford, shall play the part of the Narrator.

CRYSTAL: How did Grace get the part of Juliet? Anyone can see that Blair should be Juliet.

BLAIR: *(To Larree.)* I mean, isn't Juliet supposed to be pretty and popular? If you knew the real Grace, you wouldn't let her be Juliet.

GRACE: You don't know anything about me.

LARREE: Ladies, you will find that as you mature in age and mind, there are certain people in this world who create the evil that brings down the spirit of the human race. Intelligent people take this as the beauty and mystery of life and create art. Basically, the real you is the real reason you didn't get the lead. Now, unless your ego needs medical attention, I'll move on.

DUSTIN: Good grief!

BLAIR: *(To Larree.)* Ummm, I need to use the bathroom.

CRYSTAL: *(To Larree.)* Me, too.

(Blair and Crystal exit SL.)

LARREE: You may be excused. Return promptly for the reading. Liz Edward?

LIZ: Yeah, that's me. What part did I get? Huh? Huh?

LARREE: Dear, you must relax in theater. The audience can smell fear.

LIZ: Sorry. It won't happen again.

(Larree motions for Liz to zip up her mouth.)

LARREE: Okay, Liz, you will play the part of Juliet's nurse, a very important role.

(Liz rises and approaches Larree.)

LIZ: The Nurse! Oh, that's great! I've been studying her lines, and I know most of them. I think this is actually going to be fun!

(Liz attacks Larree with a hug.)

LARREE: I like enthusiasm, but you redefine the word. Thank you, Liz, you can sit down now.

LIZ: *(Bouncing back to her chair.)* I'm the Nurse! I can't believe it. I'm the Nurse!

DUSTIN: (*To Larree.*) Hey, when are you going to tell everyone that I'm Romeo?

LARREE: Never. You're not Romeo.

ERIC: (*To Dustin.*) Ha! I told ya I was gonna be a heartbreaker. (*To Girls.*) Eat your hearts out, ladies!

LARREE: Will you sit down! You're not Romeo, either.

DUSTIN/ERIC: Huh?!

LARREE: I was most impressed with Bert's performance yesterday. He showed such insight and depth of emotion. He will be Romeo.

DUSTIN: You've got to be kidding!

ERIC: (*To Larree.*) Yeah!

LARREE: I never kid.

DUSTIN: What part am I going to play?

ERIC: (*To Larree.*) Yeah, me too.

LARREE: (*To Dustin.*) I have decided that you, Mr. Sinclair, should be Mercutio.

DUSTIN: That's pretty cool. He's the one who jokes around all the time, right?

LARREE: Impressive. I didn't know you had actually read the play.

(Blair and Crystal return to their seats.)

ERIC: That must mean that I'm fiery Tybalt, right?

LARREE: No, Mr. Morgan, that part will go to... (*Looks at Todd.*) ...you, Mr. Hatcher.

ERIC: Great. Who's left?

LARREE: There are many fine parts in "Romeo and Juliet," Mr. Morgan, but I have cast you as Benvolio.

ERIC: I guess that's okay.

LARREE: You guess that's *okay*? You people need to get something straight. I am the director and that means that I am in charge. I don't care if you like my ideas or not. You are going to do what I say. Is that clear? (*Kids adlib "Yes," "Sure," "All right," "Okay," etc.*) I'm glad we've got that straight. Now, we have quite a few important parts that will be discussed later. We still need someone to play Friar Laurence, the Prince, and Lord Capulet. Let's talk about that after the read-through. If everyone will come with me...

(Students start to exit SL. They are silent. Larree follows with a determined look. Dee Dee gets up after they have all exited and starts snooping around)

the messy stack of props in the back. Molly and Carmen enter DSR. Dee Dee sees them and meets them CS.)

MOLLY: Hey, Dee Dee.

DEE DEE: Hey, I thought I'd look for the money. That old bird could have hidden it anywhere.

MOLLY: Good idea. Can we help?

DEE DEE: Maybe later. I think now would be a good time to talk to Jack and Melanie. They both seem to be getting tired of this old theater. Maybe they'll be willing to help us.

MOLLY: Let's get them in here. I'm sure they'll be interested in what we have to say.

(Dee Dee goes to her desk and buzzes Jack and Melanie while Molly and Carmen dig through props. Dee Dee helps them look until Jack and Melanie enter SL. They jump when Jack speaks.)

JACK: What do you want, Dee Dee?

MELANIE: Yeah, I didn't even know that you knew how to use the paging system.

JACK: What are ya'll doing over here? Don't mess with my props. They're organized so that I know exactly where everything is.

MOLLY: Oh, we were just looking at this... *(Picks up a random bowl.)* ...bowl. It's just like one that my mom used to have.

JACK: Yeah, okay. So what did you want? *(Takes the bowl out of her hand and puts it back where it was. To Dee Dee.)* Who are these people?

DEE DEE: Ms. Bitters, Ms. Roche, this is Jack Kelly, our set designer, and Melanie Carter, our costume designer.

MOLLY: I am your landlord. As you probably know, the contract for the lease of this building is going to expire at the end of this month. After that, I will be able to sell this dump—I mean theater—to Mrs. Roche here.

JACK: Not if we buy the theater before the end of the month.

(Dee Dee sneaks into Evelyn's office.)

MELANIE: What? I haven't heard anything about this.

JACK: Don't worry, Melanie, I'll fill you in later.

CARMEN: But we're not here to talk about that. We're here to talk about the two of you.

JACK: What do you want, Ms. Roach?

CARMEN: It's Roche. Are you tired of working here in this...theater? I know people who could really use your skills and help you make a very prominent and successful name for yourself in this industry.

MELANIE: What are you talking about?

CARMEN: Your fashion talent is going to waste here. I know people in Paris who could use your skills. I can see it now...Paris's new winter fashions designed by Melanie Carter, designer extraordinaire. (*Melanie stands dazed at the thought. To Jack.*) And you, wouldn't you prefer to be working in Hollywood under famous directors and getting the pay and attention you deserve? (*Puts her arms around Melanie and Jack and brings them CS.*) And I'll ask nothing in return, except that you quit working for this old theater. The jobs can be in your lap by dinnertime. What do you say?

MACOLM: Paris...that's every designer's dream!

JACK: Hollywood...I'd be famous!

CARMEN: So, what's your answer?

JACK/MELANIE: No!

JACK: (*To Carmen.*) We care too much about this theater and Mrs. Evelyn, God rest her soul. We would never desert Becky.

MELANIE: (*To Carmen.*) There is nothing—I mean nothing—that would make us betray this theater.

CARMEN: (*Angry.*) If that's the way you want it, waste away here in this theater!

MOLLY: (*To Jack and Melanie.*) Yeah, because that's all you're good for. Come the end of the month, you'll be out on your butts. (*Chuckles.*) Then you'll be sorry.

(*Becky enters USR and goes CS.*)

BECKY: What's going on here? What's the meaning of this?

CARMEN: We're talking to Melanie and Jack privately, which means you're not invited.

BECKY: Listen, Ms. Roach—

CARMEN: (*Shouts.*) Roche! Roche! Can't you people say it right?

BECKY: You can't come into my theater and talk to my workers without my permission, and believe me, you don't have my permission!

CARMEN: It's futile to keep this theater open. You'll never be able to raise the money.

MOLLY: *(To Becky.)* If your mother couldn't raise the money in 19 years, what makes you think you can raise it in less than a month?

JACK: Hey, why don't you leave before something bad happens?

CARMEN: Is that a threat?

MELANIE: No, that's a warning. This is a threat...if you don't leave, Jack and I will turn that suit into a suitcase and mail you back to whatever rock you crawled out from under.

CARMEN: All right, I get the hint. I'll leave and let you think about my offer. But remember this, I get what I want, and right now I want this theater.

MOLLY: Let's get outta here, Carmen.

(Carmen and Molly exit DSR.)

BECKY: I hate that woman. She's like a bug that needs to be squashed.

JACK: I know what you mean, but she has a point. How are we going to buy the theater?

BECKY: If we find the money that Mom hid, we can buy it.

MELANIE: Wait, hold up. What's going on? Buy the theater? What money? What's going on?

BECKY: Okay, Melanie, here's the deal. Mom saved \$70,000 dollars—

MELANIE: Seventy thousand dollars! Wow! We can buy the theater!

BECKY: There's just one problem...Mom hid the money and didn't tell anyone where she hid it.

JACK: *(To Melanie.)* So we've been looking for it.

BECKY: *(To Melanie.)* She said she hid it in the theater, but it could be anywhere.

MELANIE: Have you looked through all of the files in her office?

BECKY: We've been trying, but so has Vicky. If she finds the money first, she'll never tell anyone, and then we'll never be able to buy the theater.

MELANIE: Can't you just get a loan?

BECKY: I thought about that, but the contract that Dad drew up with that landlord won't allow it. The sale will be invalid if the money is borrowed. Dad never liked the theater. He just rented this building for Mom because he thought she would lose her interest after a while, but she never did.

JACK: It's a shame that your dad never shared your mother's dream. She really did a lot with this theater. Her Summer of Shakespeare program alone has been wonderful for the community.

BECKY: You're right, but that doesn't change our problem. We are all going to have to start searching every corner of this building to find that money.

MELANIE: Maybe we can get Larree and the summer program kids to help.

BECKY: No, I think we should keep this to ourselves.

JACK: Yeah, you're right.

MELANIE: Speaking of Larree, you're not going to believe what he did. He took some of the furs off of the costume list.

BECKY: I thought that's what you wanted.

MELANIE: Yeah, but then he added feathers.

BECKY: What's so bad about that?

MELANIE: I always keep feathers in the costume supplies, but he added so many feathers that I'd have to hunt down every bird in the world to get enough.

BECKY: What about the set, Jack?

JACK: He's agreed on three or four sets, but now he wants plant life.

BECKY: Plant life in the French Quarter?

JACK: That's what I said. But he said, "How else is Romeo going to climb up to Juliet?"

BECKY: *(Starts to rub head.)* Climb up to her?

JACK: He wants this big romantic scene with lots of plant life. I'm a set designer, not a florist. I can't take care of all of those plants, even if we could afford them.

BECKY: All right, I'll talk to him again.

MELANIE: You better, Becky. I can't work under these conditions!

JACK: It really is getting pretty bad, Becky.

BECKY: I was hoping things would get better once you all sat down and talked. It seems like everything just keeps getting worse. I just don't know what else can go wrong.

(Safety inspector enters DSR, wearing overalls and carrying a clipboard.)

SAFETY INSPECTOR: Hello, and good morning. Which one of you is... *(Checks clipboard.)* ...Becky Richmond?

BECKY: I am. Why? Who are you?

SAFETY INSPECTOR: Honey, you don't need to know my name, just my game. I will be your surprise safety inspector for the morning.

MELANIE: Safety inspector? This isn't McDonald's...it's a theater.

SAFETY INSPECTOR: Yes, well, the city is inspecting all of the buildings on this block. Now, I'm a busy man. I only need Becky to give me a tour of every nook and cranny in this... *(Looks up and around.)* Well, I'm rest assured that you know every nook and cranny, correct, Becky?

BECKY: Yes, I do. Shall we?

SAFETY INSPECTOR: We shall.

(Becky and Safety Inspector exit SL.)

MELANIE: *(To Jack.)* That's weird. I don't think this building has been inspected since I started working here 12 years ago.

JACK: It is weird.

MELANIE: Maybe we should ask to speak to his boss.

JACK: Maybe, but...

MELANIE: What?

JACK: That guy looked familiar. I'm sure I've seen him, but I don't know where.

(Becky and Safety Inspector enter SL.)

SAFETY INSPECTOR: So, in other words, the problems leave this building in two weeks...or you do. Good day, theater folk. *(Exits DSR.)*

BECKY: I hate that man.

JACK: What happened? What was he talking about?

BECKY: He barely even looked at the building. He found some rust in a few places and now he says we have to shut down.

JACK/MELANIE: Shut down?

BECKY: Well, we have two weeks for repairs.

MELANIE: What needs to be repaired?

BECKY: I don't know. He gave me this copy of his official checklist, though.

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JACK: Let me see that. (*Reads whole list silently.*)

BECKY: What does it say?

JACK: (*Still reading.*) Basically, we need to remodel everything.

MELANIE: How can that be? This building isn't that rundown, is it?

BECKY: I didn't think so. What are we going to do now?

(*Becky, Jack, and Melanie look dismayed. Blackout. Curtain. Intermission.*)

ACT II

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Later that day, rehearsal room. Becky enters USR and pulls one of the chairs to CS.)

BECKY: I thought I could handle this, but I guess I was wrong. *(Looks up.)* Mom, I tried, but I guess I just let you down again. I tried to follow in your footsteps, but I just seem to keep messing things up. Maybe Ms. Bitters is right, and I can't do this. Just when I think we're out of the woods, just when I think I see the sunlight, I'm slammed with another problem. I guess I'm just going to have to close the theater.

(Becky drops her head in her hands. Jack enters SL, looks around, pauses when he sees Becky, and then pulls a chair over to her.)

JACK: Becky? What are you doing here? I thought everyone went home after the safety inspector left.

BECKY: I'm just thinking. What are you doing here?

JACK: Just going over some of this checklist to see what really needs to be fixed.

BECKY: Why bother? We don't have the money or the time to fix anything. I think that in the morning I'm just going to call Ms. Bitters and sell the theater.

JACK: Why? I thought you wanted to keep the theater open, to keep the tradition alive in your mother's name.

(Becky laughs and starts to pace.)

BECKY: I tried. I tried, and I couldn't do it. First, the supplies are late, then the director goes crazy, my own sister is waiting to betray me, and now we're about to be shut down by the safety inspector. I tried to run this place like my mom but I can't do it.

JACK: Maybe that's your problem.

BECKY: What?

JACK: You've been trying to run this place like your mom. You have to run this place like you want to.

BECKY: And how would that be?

JACK: Well, I remember someone a long time ago who used to hit people when she wanted something done.

BECKY: Still mad at me for the time I punched you?

(Becky playfully pushes his shoulder.)

JACK: You mean for not getting the right kind of flowers for the set?

BECKY: Yeah. That was when I was in Summer of Shakespeare.

JACK: That was the first summer I worked here. We did "A Midsummer Night's Dream," didn't we?

BECKY: Yeah.

(Note: Their conversation becomes more and more intimate during the following.)

JACK: I'll never forget that summer. I had just finished my junior year of high school, and your mom hired me to help with the set. I didn't realize then that I'd still be working here after I graduated from college.

BECKY: I'm glad you stayed. I think you're the best set designer we've ever had.

JACK: I couldn't ask for a better job.

BECKY: Jack, why didn't you ever find a girlfriend?

JACK: I'm always so—

BECKY: And don't say because you were too busy.

JACK: Well, I am pretty busy, especially with my new boss. *(They both laugh awkwardly.)* Actually, I was always thinking about you.

BECKY: Well, to tell you the truth, I've thought a lot about you, too. I've dated other people, but none of them ever liked the theater or had your sense of humor.

JACK: I know what you mean. Why didn't we date before you moved away to go to school?

BECKY: I don't know. I guess I always thought of you as a friend until I wasn't around you. Then we were living in different towns.

JACK: It looks like we were given a second chance. But...oh, never mind.

(Jack turns away from her. Becky puts her hand on his shoulder.)

BECKY: What? Please tell me.

JACK: If you sell the theater, you'll leave again. Becky, you have to keep trying. I'll do anything I can to help, even if it means spending my own salary on all of those sets that Larree wants. We'll keep looking for the money. It's got to be here somewhere. I know we can work this out. There has to be a way.

(Becky takes Jack's hands in hers.)

BECKY: Okay. I don't want to give up, either. When we come back tomorrow, I'll talk to Larree and then try to find out more about that safety inspector. There's something a little too convenient about his showing up today.

JACK: I agree. He really looked familiar to me. I'll try to think about where I've seen him before.

BECKY: That sounds good.

JACK: Listen, are you hungry?

BECKY: Starving.

JACK: Good. Let's go get something to eat. My treat.

BECKY: Hey, don't forget who pays your salary!

(Becky and Jack laugh and exit arm in arm. Lights go down briefly.)

Scene 2

(AT RISE: July 11, rehearsal room. Dee Dee is sitting at her desk. Becky enters DSR.)

BECKY: Dee Dee, I want you to find out which office is in charge of safety inspectors and get someone from that office on the phone for me.

DEE DEE: Why?

BECKY: Because we had a surprise inspection yesterday, and I don't think it was legitimate. I want to find out more about it.

DEE DEE: I'll get right on it.

BECKY: Okay. I'll be in Mom's...I mean, my office.

(Becky exits USR. Dee Dee looks around after Becky exits and then picks up phone and dials it.)

DEE DEE: (Into phone.) Hey, it's me. We might have a problem. Becky didn't buy the safety inspection. She wants me to call someone and check on it. (Pause.) Yeah, well, I know I took a chance, but I didn't think they'd recognize my brother. They've never seen him before except in a picture that was on my desk. I got rid of it. (Pause.) Okay, I'll do what I can to stall, and I'll look for the money every time I get a chance. There are so many places to look. Vicky is helping me look, too, and I'm pretty sure she'll keep the money if she finds it. No problem as long as she keeps Becky from getting it. (Blair and Crystal enter DSR and go CS.) Well, I gotta go. Bye. (Hangs up.)

BLAIR: (To Crystal.) I can't believe I'm actually here. I don't even want to be in this play if I'm not the lead.

CRYSTAL: Why are you here then?

BLAIR: Daddy made me come. He said that if I start something, I have to finish it.

CRYSTAL: What did your mom say?

BLAIR: She's disappointed about the dress she bought for me to wear as Juliet, but she said that it might work for Juliet's mom, too.

CRYSTAL: At least you're Juliet's mom. I'm just the Narrator, so I don't even get to act.

(Dustin and Eric enter.)

BLAIR: I won't get to act that much, either. I only have, what, ten lines?

DUSTIN: Still upset that you didn't get Juliet?

BLAIR: Oh, please. You didn't get Romeo, so we're in the same boat.

ERIC: This ought to be some play with a nerd as Romeo and a dork as Juliet.

(They all laugh.)

BLAIR: Listen, I have an idea. If we make things unpleasant enough, maybe Grace will quit. Then I'll get to be Juliet.

ERIC: How are we going to run her off?

BLAIR: Leave that to me.

(They go to their chairs. Grace enters DSR and sits down. The others snicker at her. She ignores them and looks over her script. Liz enters, followed by Todd. Liz is digging around in her book bag, dropping papers. Todd is picking up the papers.)

TODD: Liz, here, you dropped these.

LIZ: Thank you. I am always so unorganized.

TODD: Yeah, I noticed. Maybe you should only carry around what you really need.

LIZ: But I do. *(Starts digging around and handing him things.)* I have my daily planner, my "Complete Works of Shakespeare," my binder for notes—

TODD: Whoa! Come sit over here, and let me show you what I mean.

(Liz and Todd sit near each other and sort through Liz's stuff. Bert enters DSR.)

DUSTIN: Hey, if it isn't Romeo.

(Dustin and Eric get up and start shoving Bert around.)

ERIC: *(To Bert.)* You must think you're hot stuff now, huh?

BERT: No, not really, I'm just glad to have the opportunity to—

DUSTIN: Whatever, tough guy.

ERIC: *(To Bert.)* Yeah.

DUSTIN: I think this play would be more interesting if Mercutio killed Romeo, don't you, Eric?

ERIC: Yeah! Maybe we should talk to Larree about rewriting the script.

(Larree enters SL and stands with his hands on his hips.)

BERT: Well, of course Mercutio can't kill Romeo because then the play couldn't continue.

LARREE: Break it up, guys. Everybody, sit down. *(Dustin and Eric push Bert around a few more times and then they all sit down.)* We worked out a few things at yesterday's read-through, but we need to work today on learning our lines. Choose a partner to run lines with today. Once I'm confident that you know your lines, we will proceed. If you will come with me...

(Students start to follow Larree off SL. Blair walks with Crystal. Dustin walks with Eric.)

GRACE: *(To Bert.)* Okay, Romeo, we've got a lot of work to do.

TODD: *(To Liz.)* Maybe we can work together. Everyone else seems to be paired off.

LIZ: I'd like that.

(They exit. Dee Dee gets up and heads toward Evelyn's office. Becky and Vicky enter DSR, and Dee Dee runs back to her desk.)

VICKY: Becky, do you really think that you are going to keep this theater open? I mean, you've always been hardheaded, but I think you've taken this far enough.

BECKY: You can say whatever you want, but I'm not giving up. There are plenty of places we haven't even started to look yet.

VICKY: You're right. I guess the race is on. May the best woman win.

(Vicky hurriedly walks off SL and runs into Jack, who's trying to enter SL.)

JACK: What's your rush, Vicky?

VICKY: It's Victoria, and it's none of your business. *(Exits.)*

JACK: Hey, Becky. What's Vicky—I mean, Victoria—rushing around for?

BECKY: She's trying to find the money. I think we should probably start looking, too.

JACK: You're right. I dug around in my office this morning, and I started looking through some of the props in the prop room. Maybe we should continue looking there.

BECKY: That's a good idea. *(Pause. Neither one moves.)* What?

JACK: Oh, nothing. I was just thinking about last night.

BECKY: Me, too. I really had a nice time.

JACK: So did I. We better hurry up and find that money. I don't want you getting away again.

BECKY: Oh, Jack...

(Becky playfully slaps Jack's shoulder. Jack tickles her and chases her out SL. Dee Dee makes sure they are gone and then sneaks into Evelyn's office as lights fade to black.)

Scene 3

(AT RISE: July 15, rehearsal room. Student actors are sitting in chairs, except for Blair, Grace, and Liz, who are standing CS. Larree is standing in front of Dee Dee's empty desk.)

LARREE: (To actors.) Okay, let's take this scene from the top. We only have two weeks until our performance. It's time to get serious, people.

BLAIR: I'm having a problem with this scene.

LARREE: What is the problem?

BLAIR: (Points at Grace.) Her.

GRACE: What did I do?

BLAIR: It's what you didn't do. In this scene, Lady Capulet is asking Juliet if she wants to get married. I mean, Juliet is only thirteen. Don't you think she would get mad at her mom for even suggesting that? I sure would. I would tell my mom off. You just act all polite and shy.

GRACE: That's what Juliet is supposed to do.

BLAIR: Oh, really.

LARREE: Yes, really. You have read the play, haven't you, Miss Hamilton?

BLAIR: Sure, but didn't you say we were going to update it? I mean, what mother in her right mind would ask her 13-year-old daughter to get married?

LARREE: We can't change that concept because then we would be changing the whole play. We really don't have time for all of this arguing. Let's just run through the lines and try to work out some of the blocking. Remember, Lady Capulet and Juliet will be wearing very elaborate costumes because they are about to attend the Mardi Gras ball. Okay, and...action.

(Girls act out the following scene. There is obvious tension between Blair and Grace. Liz concentrates the whole time on saying her lines exactly right. She occasionally looks at Todd, who cues her.)

BLAIR: (As Lady Capulet.) "Nurse, call my daughter to me."

LIZ: (As Nurse.) "Where's this girl? What, Juliet!"

(Juliet enters.)

GRACE: (As Juliet.) "How now! Who calls?"

LIZ: (As Nurse.) "Your mother."

GRACE: (As Juliet.) "Madam, I am here. What is your will?"

BLAIR: (As Lady Capulet.) "Tell me, daughter Juliet. How stands your disposition to be married?"

GRACE: (As Juliet.) "It is an honor that I dream not of."

BLAIR: (As Lady Capulet.) "Well, think of marriage now; younger than you, here in Verona, ladies of esteem, are made already mothers. Thus then in brief: the valiant Paris seeks you for his love."

LIZ: (As Nurse.) "A man, young lady! Lady, such a man as all the world: why, he's a man of wax."

BLAIR: (As Lady Capulet.) "Speak briefly, can you like of Paris' love?"

GRACE: (As Juliet.) "I'll look to like, if looking liking move: but no more deep will I endart mine eye than your consent gives strength to make it fly."

(Servant enters.)

TODD: (As Servant.) "Madam, the guests are come and supper is served up."

BLAIR: (As Lady Capulet.) "We follow thee."

LARREE: That was just awful! Miss Edwards, you are going to have to learn your lines. Trust yourself and don't look at Mr. Hatcher every five seconds. He won't be prompting you during the performances. Miss Hamilton, you are going to have to put your personal problems aside if this play is going to work.

BLAIR: My personal problems! (Indicating Grace.) What about Miss Perfect here.

LARREE: I feel that Miss Howard is capturing Juliet beautifully. You, on the other hand, are Juliet's mother. You need to act like you are actually interested in her. You are talking to her like she is someone you hate.

BLAIR: Well...

GRACE: Don't you want the play to look good?

BLAIR: Of course. That's why I think I should be Juliet!

LARREE: Enough of this. I'm going to take the guys to my office to work on their fight scene. You people go over this scene again and when I come back, I want to see some improvement. (*Heads SL.*) Come on, guys.

(*Larree exits and the Male Students, except for Todd, follow him offstage.*)

BLAIR: I'm not doing anything if he's not going to direct.

CRYSTAL: For sure.

GRACE: (*To Blair.*) You can't be mature enough to work without someone standing over you?

(*Dee Dee and Carmen enter USR.*)

BLAIR: What does maturity have to do with it?

DEE DEE: Ladies, we couldn't help but overhear. Is there a problem?

BLAIR: There's a big problem.

CARMEN: Maybe I can help.

GRACE: Who are you?

CARMEN: My name is Carmen Roche, and I'm a theater lover. I've had some acting experience. Now, what exactly is wrong?

BLAIR: (*Points at Grace.*) She won't do the scene right. (*Points at Liz.*) She won't learn her lines, and the director keeps telling me that my flawless performances are all wrong. To top it all, we don't have our costumes yet because there seems to be some sort of budget problem.

CARMEN: I didn't realize you were having budget problems. I'll be glad to donate money for the production. (*To Dee Dee.*) Miss Dixon, will you please tell the owner that she can count on my support for whatever amount she needs?

DEE DEE: I'll get right on it.

CARMEN: Why don't you let me see part of your scene so I can make some suggestions, okay, girls?

(*Girls adlib, "Okay," "Sure," "Why not?" "I guess so," etc.*)

GRACE: Let's start from Lady Capulet's line asking Juliet how she feels about marriage.

CARMEN: That sounds good.

(Girls start the scene. The same problems are evident, but Blair is even more uncaring and unemotional. All except Servant start the scene onstage.)

BLAIR: *(As Lady Capulet.)* "Tell me, daughter Juliet. How stands your disposition to be married?"

GRACE: *(As Juliet.)* "It is an honor that I dream not of."

BLAIR: *(As Lady Capulet.)* "Well, think of marriage now; younger than you, here in Verona, ladies of esteem, are made already mothers. Thus then in brief: the valiant Paris seeks you for his love."

LIZ: *(As Nurse.)* "A man, young lady! Lady, such a man as all the world: why, he's a man of wax."

BLAIR: *(As Lady Capulet.)* "Speak briefly, can you like of Paris' love?"

GRACE: *(As Juliet.)* "I'll look to like, if looking liking move: but no more deep will I endart mine eye than your consent gives strength to make it fly."

(Servant enters.)

TODD: *(As Servant.)* "Madam, the guests are come and supper is served up."

BLAIR: *(As Lady Capulet.)* "We follow thee."

CARMEN: Lady Capulet, what is your name?

BLAIR: Blair Hamilton.

CARMEN: Well, Blair, I thought that was a fabulous performance. Such depth of emotion! Juliet, what is your name?

GRACE: Grace Howard.

CARMEN: Well, Grace, don't you think you would be mad at your mom for telling you to start thinking about marriage?

BLAIR: *(To Grace.)* See, I told you.

GRACE: Actually, no, I don't. It was not unusual for girls to get married at a young age back then.

CARMEN: I think it would make your performance much better if you would act really mad at your mother.

BLAIR: Thank you so much for your help. Maybe you can talk to our director. He doesn't have a clue.

CARMEN: Maybe another time. Miss Dixon, please talk to the owner for me. Break a leg, girls!

(Carmen exits DSR. Dee Dee writes a message for Becky and goes to put it in her office.)

BLAIR: She was nice.

GRACE: Are you kidding? She doesn't know anything about theater.

BLAIR: She liked my performance.

(Larree enters SL.)

GRACE: Like I said.

LARREE: Okay, girls, that's enough. Obviously we aren't ready for a serious rehearsal. Let's go back to my office and work on this scene. *(Girls exit SL. Jack and Melanie enter SL.)* Hi, just the people I need to see. When are those costumes going to be ready for a fitting, and when am I going to be able to start rehearsing with a real set?

JACK: We're doing the best we can, Larree.

MELANIE: *(To Larree.)* We have very little money, and every time we order something, it is late or out of stock.

JACK: *(To Larree.)* I'll see what I can do about getting some sort of set together for you by next week.

LARREE: *(Angry.)* Next week?! How do you people ever stage anything around here? I'll only have one week for rehearsals with a set and who knows when I'll ever get to do a dress rehearsal. This is completely unacceptable! *(Storms off SL.)*

MELANIE: *(To Jack.)* I've had just about enough of that guy. I just can't work under these conditions!

JACK: You're not going to be able to work at all if we don't find the money.

MELANIE: You have a point. Let's dig through some of those props.

JACK: I've already looked once, but it won't hurt to try again.

(Melanie and Jack start digging through the props against the back wall.)

MELANIE: What's going to happen if we don't find that money?

JACK: I don't want to think about it.

MELANIE: Maybe if we ask enough people, we could get the money together.

(Becky and Vicky enter DSR.)

JACK: I guess it's worth a try, but I have my doubts.

VICKY: I'm telling you, Becky, there's no way you're going to be able to keep this theater open.

BECKY: I know that's what you think. You've told me plenty of times. What I don't know is why you keep coming here.

VICKY: I want to make sure you tell me if you find the money.

BECKY: That's selfish. I know you won't tell me if you find it.

VICKY: Of course I will...on August first.

(Vicky exits into Evelyn's office. Jack and Melanie join Becky CS.)

JACK: *(To Becky.)* Melanie and I have continued to look for the money whenever we can, but there's no sign of it.

MELANIE: *(To Becky.)* Of course, we have very little extra time right now because of our little Mardi Gras king.

BECKY: I thought Larree was getting better. What's wrong now?

JACK: He won't work with us at all. He keeps demanding more and more expensive things, and we can't provide any of them.

MELANIE: *(To Becky.)* I tried to order cheaper fabric, but everything I try to get is either out of stock or lost in the mail.

JACK: *(To Becky.)* Larree is asking too much, but I can't provide even a minimal set because I have no materials.

BECKY: *(Realizes.)* That's it!

JACK: That's what?

BECKY: A minimal set.

MELANIE: I don't follow.

BECKY: We will simplify everything and use what we have.

MELANIE: That could work, but I don't know if Larree will go for it.

BECKY: He won't have a choice. Things are getting desperate.

[END OF FREEVIEW]