

FRIAR WITH A CROWBAR

By

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The Place: A Friar's cell in Verona, Italy

The Time: Spring, 1582

Dramatis Personae:

FRIAR LAWRENCE: a Franciscan friar, 30's-40's. A devout and active monk, overconfident in his own abilities and righteousness, and often in trouble with his superiors.

FRIAR JOHN: a Franciscan friar, 20's. Young, earnest and handsome.

VICAR THOMAS: a Franciscan vicar, 40's-50's. A severe man and a strict administrator.

HERO: a noblewoman of Messina, early 20's. Smart and unassuming.

LIAM: a middle-class Englishman, 18. Shows a keen if naïve fascination with everything going on around him.

ROMEO: a Veronese nobleman of the house Montague, teens

JULIET: a Veronese noblewoman of the house Capulet, 13

PALLBEARERS (4): Anonymous Franciscan friars in robes

(NOTE: The actors portraying VICAR THOMAS, ROMEO, JULIET and HERO can serve as the pallbearers.)

ACT I
SCENE 1

(A Friar's cell. Furnishings are sparse and severe, but there are flowers and plants, an assortment of bottles and salves, and a row of small cages containing rabbits - an Elizabethan biology lab. A small altar with crucifix sits in a nook upstage. Stage right, a heavy door leads outside. A doorway stage left leads into the friary proper. A door center-left leads to a private chamber.

The set stops a few feet before the edge of the forestage. The area in front of the set serves as an exterior street.

The stage is dark except for a spotlight on FRIAR JOHN, standing on the forestage. He wears a gray wool cloak with a hood (down). Around his waist is a cincture knotted 3 times with a cross and a rosary hanging from it. All the friars in the play dress similarly, and their hoods are always down except when stated otherwise.)

FRIAR JOHN

Good even, guests; I pray your ears do lend
As we declaim Verona's tale of woe.
Bold Friar Lawrence, whom I know as friend
Doth shove his hood where friars ought not go.
Of good will he o'erflows, but oft are found
The plots he makes most rash and ill-proposed;

(Lights up on the stage, where FRIAR LAWRENCE silently marries ROMEO and JULIET. FRIAR JOHN walks back and acts as a witness while still addressing the audience.)

E'en now, two children gathered on this ground
He weds, though both their clans stand hard-opposed.
This selfsame friar, filled with true compassion,
Doth shelter two more people in this room,
All these seeks to aid in his own fashion
Though it may prove to orchestrate their doom.
Give us thereby your gaze, and let us spy
How, when and if these plans should go awry.

(Blackout.)

SCENE 2

(HERO sits dressed in an overlarge friar's robe with the hood up, reading an enormous book titled "Tragedies." A knock at the exterior door. She tries to cross to the door, but the hood obstructs her vision and she keeps bumping into things, muttering. She walks into the wall next to the exterior door and pulls the hood off in frustration. She unbolts the door and FRIAR LAWRENCE enters in full robe, followed by LIAM in street clothes. LIAM carries a sack and takes in his surroundings with interest.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE
(to HERO)

Hero! Why dost thou stand here so attired?
Thy visage needs conceal lest you be found.
The vicar never slumbers, so it seems,
But rather walks obsessed about these place
In search of my transgressions, so to catch
And censure me for ills real and perceived.
Costumed in friar's robe, 'tis hoped you may
Escape his eye and roam about unloosed
As clouds may gallivant about the sky,
Or daffodils sprout freely in the spring.
Prithee, I beg you, try and look the part.

(He pulls HERO's hood over her head. She pulls it back down.)

HERO

I know not how you men can wear this cloth.
This woolen mantle itch like holy hell
And habit hangs so low above my brow
I cannot see what looms in front of me.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Forget not how your path to me did lead.
This cloak you needs must brook for a short spell,
So you may safely tuck yourself away
Until the wretched slanders on your name
Do dissipate in fair Messina's wind.
And some of us, it seems I need remind,
Do sport these cloaks not once, but for all time.

HERO
(sullen)

For my invective I do pardon beg,
And ask of you remission for my speech.

LIAM

'Tis good you should. Friar Lawrence holds solid argument. He wears this rough cloth for godly reasons; you but for your own protection and advancement - or so might I gather.

(FRIAR LAWRENCE grabs a spare cloak and throws it to LIAM.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Most pleased am I to mark this argument
For it pertains assuredly to thee.
Pray put this on and join us in this masque,
For you no more allowed are here than she.

(LIAM grudgingly puts on the cloak.)

HERO

(quietly, to FRIAR LAWRENCE)

Prithee, friar, what stranger bring you here
Who dips his toe so quick in our affairs?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Hero, this is Liam. Liam, Hero.
Be known from England came this gentleman
With letters recommending him to me.
His schooling done, he struts himself enthused
Through Europe's many main streets and back roads;
His benefactor did bequest some pass
Whereby this lucky youth might ride for free
Upon the boats and coaches of all lands.
His jaunt takes him to divers hallowed sites
And monasteries, friaries as well:
Herein he seeks where to conclude his search
And a vocation holy to pursue.
As he does seem substantial Christian man
And one for whom the Greyfriars do exert
Some pull - who someday might don cloak for real -
I offered take him in, and scheme I how
The two of you might now be hid in full;
Since laymen are forbidden in these cells.
In faith, be wary, then, the two of you,

In corners and in shadows shade withal,
Shy far from chance encounters and speak not.
Now pardon while I look upon my trials.

HERO

I happily will help, and greet this Liam.

(FRIAR LAWRENCE and HERO walk around the cell,
examining and watering the plants and poring over
items in the lab. HERO follows. LIAM
soliloquizes.)

LIAM

What relief it is to free myself from godless England!
Where one might never celebrate high holy mass, or
hear word of the pope, or even be married in the
proper idiom. All ceremony dashed, the gilt edges of
the Church painted over, replaced with plain matte
devoid of pageantry! Fie on it, for there is no joy in
it.

I was told it was important to visit this friar. "If
want you see how heaven works," said my host, "go see
Friar Lawrence and he'll show it sure to thee."
There's a powerful thought! So I'll watch how he
functions. This holy vocation doth compel me with
force. My father has no funds to send me to
university, and these Friars Minor may support my
learning, provided I join them and remain poor
forever. Also celibate. (Looks toward HERO.) I cannot
overlook celibate. But I will find my true course.
Where there is a Liam, there is a way.

(HERO notices LIAM talking and approaches him.)

HERO

Sir, whom do you address with lengthy speech?
It seems as though you converse with a wall.

LIAM

Madam, I pray you give me pardon. I know my own aim
here, but realize not yours. Wherefore hid'st such a
lady in this lowly site?

HERO

For that I owe this friar a debt sincere.
In fair Messina lived I happily,

I there in recent days was roundly wooed,
And by my family's wish was to be wed,
To Claudio, a man revered and just.
At least, I thought him thus, but when the time
Came to exchange our vows, he did abstain.
Before my eyes he grew into a beast:
A whore he called me, and I stood accused
Of casting off my sacred maidenhood.

LIAM

'Swounds!

HERO

No whit of what I stand accused was true
Or known to me at all. No hope to speak
In mine own chaste behalf, to smite his lies
With fervent oaths of truth.

LIAM

A doleful tale.

HERO

I did collapse - in truth, I did but swoon -
And left I was for dead, there in the church,
My corse abandoned on an altar fouled
By my accuser, lately my fiance.
I soon awoke, after which schemed this friar
- who in Messina was a visitor -
To spirit me away from all such strife
Unto this spartan cell. This way, he claims,
My absence will make Claudio's heart grow fond,
While friends and allies toil to clear my name.

LIAM

This sounds like much ado-

HERO

-Indeed it is,
But in truth, it all about nothing be.

LIAM

This is indeed a clever friar! I'm sure in scarce few
days you will return cleared to the altar.

HERO

How crude it is you speak. It lacks in charm.

LIAM

Forgive my sere words. How is it you all talk with such bouquet? My jargon seems dirt piled between rows of hyacinth.

HERO

'Tis simple. Know thee not of the blank verse?

(LIAM looks confused.)

HERO

(sing-song)

All need you do is speak an iamb, thus:
An I-amb. Five times say it in a row.
Repeat this trend, now, every time you speak.
'Tis common in this land to talk like this
And verily, the surly knaves who don't
Are nary worth the effort to engage.

(FRIAR LAWRENCE, still inspecting his lab, pipes in.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

This haughty talk in verse which she describe
Is all the rage in Rome, and Veronese
Have it adopted too. I think it best
You orient your speech that way yourself,
And better hide you thus, for when in Rome...

LIAM

Yes? Prithee tell me. When in Rome do what?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

(counting off Liam's syllables)

Why Liam, now you've got the gist of it.
Already sound thee like a Veronese.

(FRIAR LAWRENCE opens a rabbit cage and pokes the motionless rabbit inside.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

(to HERO)

Hero! (gestures to rabbit) Still dead?

HERO

I have not heard a peep
Since you this morning took of me your leave.

FRIAR LAWRENCE.

Hm. That's not as it should be. Pray do you
Keep watch on Aristotle (gestures to rabbit)
and give yell
When he aroused is from his endless sleep.

HERO

In this and all things surely I obey.

(FRIAR LAWRENCE walks toward the door to the
private cell.)

HERO

Excuse me, Friar, But have you word from home?
My thoughts I find do bend most readily
To Claudio and my besmirched name.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

No news I have, but please me worry none,
Doubt not your death do haunt him horribly,
And every moment sags he with regret.
A miracle will seem your coming home
And your false crimes reduced to afterthought.

LIAM

I shall profess I very much admire
The notion of this scheme, for though I frown
At falsehood, this small lie hath been deployed
In service of a vast and lasting good.

HERO

For my own sake, I pray you are correct.
Yet even now I shudder at the thought,
My own beloved, taken in by lies
And slanders voiced, to me no credence lent.
I never did to him object before,
Content to let my kith and kin control
All of my choices, up to who I wed.
But can he love me true and yet so cruel
Be like to scorn me on our wedding day?
Perhaps this union rash and forced was -
Indeed a stranger Claudio is to me -
And better that this scandal did disturb.

I wonder if I might be better served
To never home return, but stay a corse,
Embalmed in my sorrow and remorse.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Hold forth thy youthful blather, foolish girl,
If ever Claudio doubted, he had cause.
Put trust in mighty God and this good friar;
Revered hands are at work in these our plans.

LIAM

I wager now the law in fair Messina
Does ferret out all those who did you ill.
This friar will soon owe greater debt.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

You saw how earlier I did injoint
Two earnest youths within this very cell?
There too, lies subtle drift, for they do wed
With no permitting from their warring tribes
But still with mine own blessing, for I hold
Their love will hatred overwhelm in time.

LIAM

Missed I a marriage? Oh unhappy day!
That I had seen two lovers joined; I would
Have offered cheer and wished them boundless joy.
Naught doth excite mine senses and mine eyes
More than a couple twined eternally.
How can a story strike but happy notes
When in connubial bliss lie he and she?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

'Tis a fair quatrain, and most earnest spake.
Howe'er, I must confess that as of late
This story unexpected turn has ta'en.
The groom has fallen prey to some mischance,
And from Verona is compelled to flee.
I think he will my counsel seek anon-

(A knock on the door. LIAM and HERO pull up their
hoods and try to look inconspicuous. FRIAR
LAWRENCE opens the door, and ROMEO walks in.

FRIAR LAWRENCE (cont.)

Come, Romeo, into my chamber hie.

(ROMEO and FRIAR LAWRENCE walk into his chamber and shut the door. LIAM and HERO's hoods come down. HERO walks to the chamber door and touches it.)

HERO

(to the closed door)

I would I had their faith in all these schemes.
I pray they work for them, and so for me.

(Blackout.)

SCENE 3

(LIAM and HERO both have their ears pinned to the door of the private chamber, listening as FRIAR LAWRENCE speaks to ROMEO. They talk in stage whispers.)

LIAM

Wait. Yon nobleman does live in warring house
From Juliet, his new betrothed, and now
Hath slain another member of that clan?
And now this Romeo must flee the town?

HERO

(annoyed)

Is oft considered rude in Italy
To vault into a story middle-stream.

(They back a bit away from the door, bored.)

HERO

'Sblood, how this friar drones! He is but like
An Englishman, the way he piles on words.

LIAM

I would think from Messina he had come,
So rich his words in rind, so little fruit.

(HERO bites her thumb at LIAM; he gives her the rude 'backwards v' English gesture.)

LIAM

(playful)

Do you bite your thumb at me, madam?

HERO

I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but-

(A noise within and the chamber door starts to open. They back farther away from the door, trying to look casual. FRIAR LAWRENCE and ROMEO walk out in mid-conversation.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

...Either be gone before the watch be set,
Or by the break of day disguis'd from hence.
Sojourn in Mantua. I'll find out your man,
And he shall signify from time to time
Every good hap to you that chances here.
Give me thy hand. 'Tis late, farewell, good night.

(They shake hands.)

ROMEO

But that a joy past joy calls out on me,
It were a grief, so brief to part with thee.
Farewell.

(ROMEO exits through the exterior door. FRIAR LAWRENCE looks troubled.)

HERO

(to FRIAR LAWRENCE)

What unknown chances do conspire to cause
Such well-pronounced furrows on thy brow?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

This news confounds us all. I needs must send
This rash young man to Mantua, for just
This same forenoon he Juliet did wed,
Caught up was he within a melee rash,
And stabbed the instigator through the heart.

LIAM

One Tybalt, do you mean.

(FRIAR LAWRENCE gives him a curious look. HERO surreptitiously kicks LIAM.)

LIAM

I late have heard
The story elsewhere, out upon the street.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

The streets have ears indeed, as do these doors.
These Capulets now call for Romeo's head;
The prince, who right construes these horrid deeds,
Did wise elect to banish him instead.
A plague on both their houses, which produce
Such heinous bursts of violence in the town.

HERO

Whereby to Mantua must he retreat?
Forsooth, if the new groom doth need a place
Most welcome in Messina would he be.
I can a spare divan at home provide,
And larder stocked with victuals for their use.
Tell Romeo the key's under the mat.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

A thousand thanks, but-

(A noise from outside. LIAM and HERO quickly put up their hoods and retreat to the chapel, where they kneel and pretend to pray. The friary door opens and VICAR THOMAS walks in., the vicar has little tolerance for FRIAR LAWRENCE's meddling ways. He is focused on FRIAR LAWRENCE and doesn't notice LIAM and HERO, who - with LIAM leading the effort - proceed to gently mock him behind his back.)

VICAR THOMAS

Who did I witness slinking out yon door?

(He points at the exterior door. FRIAR LAWRENCE is silent.)

VICAR THOMAS

For if mine eyes have function I believe
'Twas Romeo of Montague, the same
Whom presently hath slain a Capulet
And from Verona justly been expunged.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Indeed, Good Vicar Thomas, that's correct
And that is why you did but see him leave.

VICAR THOMAS

But why then did he prior come withal?
I find you, friar, lacking in the sense
That God bestows on all from men to sloths.
Thou art no deity, despite thy thought
That those who toil for God must e'er be right.
Our place is not to sway the paths of men
But rather forge our own as God doth will.

(He holds up his cinctures.)

These knots about our waists do represent
Our vows of poverty, obedience
And chastity, no loop do we wear here
For mirth or for shenanigans withal.
Remember, we have spake of this before -
If I do find you meddling about,
Forgetting humble place that we needs hold,
A rank blot will I place next to your name,
And ship you to dark corners of the world
Where Christians make a lovely base for soups.
A martyr soon you'll be, desired or not.
Therefore I plead again, concern you not
With rectifying ills, but focus please
Within these walls, and worship with thy knees.

(VICAR gestures to the altar as he says this, and notices LIAM and HERO, who promptly return to 'prayer.')

VICAR THOMAS

What apparitions now do haunt this cell?
Have you more guests? Why was I not informed?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

They just arriv'd, good vicar, disembark'd
from far-off lands, where sought they e'en to spread
The Word of God to cannibals and fiends.
Thus very tired are they; do give them rest.

VICAR THOMAS

Be they Veronese or from some foreign land?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Indeed sir I know not; they will not say - (grasping)
For silent vows the two of them have spake.

VICAR THOMAS

They pledge no speech? Then how know you their tales?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Through ... gesture, sir, and movement of the form.
Having no voice for years, most skilled they are
At prodding meaning out without a sound.

VICAR THOMAS

But tell, then, if they have no use of words,
How they convert the heathen of the world?
Can one break from the woods to Indian camp,
And, verily, just wave thy hands a bit
(Waves his hands a bit)
To bring across the doctrine of the Church?
Methinks this doth belittle Christian faith.

(FRIAR LAWRENCE hems and haws. LIAM and HERO get up, surround the VICAR, and act out a confused pantomime of converting heathen.)

VICAR THOMAS

By this charade I hold me unconvinced.

(LIAM grabs the VICAR's attention, grabs a quill and paper and starts to write.)

VICAR THOMAS

What is this tongue he scribes? I know it not.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

And nor do I. (To LIAM) Is this the can'bal's tongue?
Speak thusly all the anthropophagi?

(LIAM nods vigorously.)

VICAR THOMAS

These men who feast on innards fresh, and with
Blood wash them down, can write in their own tongue?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

These friars did tongue create, good sir, that they
Might swell the Word of God to distant lands.
Mayhap, I think I recognize the text:

(FRIAR LAWRENCE picks up the paper)

"In the beginning, God created man--"

VICAR THOMAS

Enough! There's little merit in this tale,
But stand you all in luck, for leave I must,
As matters of more import must I tend,
And will return to this at later time.

(TO HERO and LIAM)

As friars both you be, we meet anon
When next we pray, at midnight plus two hours.

(VICAR THOMAS exits through the priory door. LIAM and HERO bite their thumbs at him as he leaves.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Faith, I think he credited us not.
But most commendable was the attempt.

HERO

(to LIAM)

Where didst thou learn to play at mime so well?

LIAM

I oft performed with small and sundry troupes
Whilst I did live and teach in Lancashire.
'Twas slight diversion for a time before
I fell to concentrate on holy texts.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

(holding up paper)

Adept you are with quill and vellum too.

LIAM

I never would have thought the Queen's own tongue
The lingo of the men who eat themselves.

HERO

What doth you write to fool the Vicar's eye?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

(reading paper)

"A plague on both their houses." Is't correct?

LIAM

The phrase rang true.

FRIAR LAWRENCE
(To audience as much as to LIAM
and HERO)

A plague on this house too! That's true to me.
If all I hoped to do was lock my gate
To men and kneel in lonesome silence, I
Would have to a monastery gone.
He sounds most like my father, who declared
That I might run the fastest in my school
If only I did pray enough for it.
God I beseeched for weeks to make me swift,
Indeed so often was I penitent
I wore my knees out and could scarcely walk.
This told I to my father, who did say
Drop to my knees and pray my knees to mend.
Now I do make my prayers standing up,
Proceeding where I might succour impart.
No deity will reach his mighty hand
Down from the heavens so to right all things.
It is to we, ourselves, that we must turn,
And know the Lord encompassed through our acts.
Therefore, take heart, support me in my will;
Our actions need we make, for good or ill.

(Lights down on the cell and up on the forestage.
ROMEO crosses silently, headed to Mantua.)
Blackout.)

SCENE 4

(LIAM and HERO are alone in the cell, deep in
discussion. HERO leafs through "Tragedies.")

LIAM

He could not in the chapel murder him,
For then was he at prayer, and his soul goes-

HERO

-To heaven, not to hell, I comprehend.
So why does not the prince just hold his sword
Till Claudius right himself and leave the church,
Then seize the hilt and run him quickly through?
Revenge is had in full, thus ends the book.

(HERO slams the book shut.)

LIAM

Because he had just prayed. When he but kneels
In penitence, protection last him for
An hour, at least, 'fore re-appears hell's maw.

HERO

An hour? Where hast thou happed upon that sum?

LIAM

From holy canon doth it come, of course.

HERO

Be there some passage in Leviticus
Where we are told exactly sixty clicks
Be how much bonus time one earns post-prayer?
Methinks this argument makes little sense;
Methinks this Hamlet doth delay too much.

LIAM

If you hold such opinions of this piece
Perhaps you should your own edition script!

HERO

A stronger tale I might recount myself
Than could your infant form, I would attest.
But bend your ear to know where I object:
So Claudius to heaven go, while poor
Ophelia is buried in plain soil.

LIAM

The lady took her life, and merits thus
No Christian burial, but placement in
Ground seeded but with peasants, slaves and Moors.

HERO

But she was driven mad by her fell lot;
A lover off his gourd, a father slain.

LIAM

I think you forego dogma for your heart.
The Holy law one cannot contravene
On simple circumstance or sad mishap.

HERO

The Holy law doth dictate I be slain
For mine own indiscretions, though I none.
With yon besmirched Dane I sympathize,

And think in sacred ground deserves her place,
For lately have I seen the man'r in which
One might be call'd a scoundrel for no cause.

LIAM

Perhaps you ought to make these notions known.
This corse in Denmark has no voice to speak,
But this one (gestures to HERO)
can still change the course of things,
If only she might talk as frank and deep
In her defense as she hath done to me.

(FRIAR LAWRENCE enters through the friary door.)

HERO

Dispensed you have good Romeo away?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

'Tis on the road to Mantua anon.

LIAM

Now Juliet, we learn, is to be wed
To some unwanted and unknowing groom,
Her family not apprised of Romeo.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I see this scandal spreads itself with haste.

LIAM

No party shall you be to bigamy,
I trust, and stand by earnest vows late made.
What grand escape have planned you then withal,
That Romeo and Juliet shall have
New-dated pledge not all asunder rent?

(FRIAR LAWRENCE does not respond, instead walking over to the rabbit and nudging it. It wakes up. He checks some paperwork near the cage.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

(half to himself)

Hours forty-two hath this frail rabbit slept
And now it wake most like the newly born.

HERO

What portent do these mumbles hold for us?

(FRIAR LAWRENCE holds up a large vial.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

The vicar would have us believe that God
Doth offer nature for that it might fuel
Naught but some inspiration by its worth.
He would we pray to stones, and fields, and birds
Like Francis did. But he doth not observe
That earth can offer us much more than prayers.
Here, see what grace these herbs and salves may lend.
This potion will I pass to Juliet,
Who, seeming dead, will be dispensed thus
From marriage vows and all demands of men.
I will a letter send to Romeo
Informing him of this, that he may know
And not be overcome by baseless grief.
I'll wait three days whilst all do give lament,
Then to the mausoleum shall I tread;
Her so-called corse will I from crypt remove,
And when the hour doth strike, I will unfurl
Her present liveliness, and sue for peace,
That Veronese a lesson all might learn
From this reversal of untimely death.

LIAM

A scheme most bold and brilliant, I do think.

HERO

God's wounds, please tell me this is all some gibe,
That plot you not in earnest, but in fun.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

A man of God should never jest, sweet girl.
Why dost object to this considered ploy?

HERO

I know not where to start! Why should this be
Your plan for every broad contingency?
Fake a death! Steal away this Juliet
That in her absence might we all a lesson learn
And feel a fuzzy warmth at her return.
Why need your machinations be so bold,
So byzantine, to chance and fate so prone?
Why do you not just steal the girl away,
Bring her to Mantua, and let the two
Young marrieds lay their own course by and by?
Would that be too direct and logical?

Why, fake a death! Are lendors at your door?
Fake a death! Do you not like your parents,
Or your vicar, or your - broth? Fake a death!

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I think thou speak'st a bit-

HERO

-I am not done!
What great salve would you use, this to achieve?
A potion used for centuries? Why, no.
An unction of a mountebank? Not e'en.
A tincture you employ that once - but once -
Thou hast made work, and that upon a hare.
Dost not this seem but premature to you?
And thou wouldst stake a person's life on this?
And hardly must I note this selfsame plan
Holds of success no certain guarantee,
For when I glance upon a looking-glass I spy
A living corse, and one who has not found
Herself absolved, or loved the more as hoped.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

'Tis clear you fathom not my plan's true depth,
For in the shallows do you bog yourself.
If I do spirit Juliet away
To her fair Romeo, most fleeting is
Advantage in this change, for Capulets
And Montagues would doubtless hunt them down.
But Capulet and Montague would both
Be shattered by this epic tale of woe,
And certain 'tis when Juliet arise
In three more days, as like unto our Lord -
Why, hands will join in peace, rank arguments
Will be forgot anon, and strife will end.
For in this seeming death real death will lurk
And burrow to the fore of every mind,
To make a fetid thing this longtime feud.
This seems to me most clear, (to LIAM)
doth not thou think?

LIAM

I could not fathom better form myself
Than this to bring these battles to a close.

HERO

Let this "cadaver" make it clear to all:
This ploy is ludicrous. It hath no sense.
When Juliet doth enter in this cell
To take her poison, halt her fast I will.
My sound advice I trust the girl to take,
And steal away to Mantua post-haste.

(A knock at the exterior door.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

(to door)

A moment, please, and answer you I will.

(to HERO)

Now atrophies my patience with this talk.
I think it time to share what I have learn'd:
A message lately from Messina come
With news of worth to you. Your dogged friends
Hath found the plot to sully thy good name.
Heart-broke is Claudio now, and cries aloud
At your fresh tomb - oh, yes, you have a tomb -
Whyever he did doubt your maidenhead.
Wait only now for the appointed time
When you may cross again the River Styx
And to Messina go to claim thy groom.

(HERO is speechless.)

LIAM

How came you, Lawrence, by this news of late?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

In an epistle brought upon the morn.

HERO

Might now I see this missive late received?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Delivered was it to the hands of John,
Who did to me convey its words anon.

(A flicker of doubt crosses LIAM's face and is noted by FRIAR LAWRENCE.)

LIAM

Huh.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Assured be thou this letter have I seen.
John keeps it on his person still, I think.
Now canst I let young Juliet in the door?

HERO

Sweet vindication do I have at last.
Prithee, forgive me for my vehemence,
And mark not my objections to your plot.
If clever fraud of death hath worked for me,
It must be meet to machinate again.

(The knocking has resumed. FRIAR LAWRENCE answers the door. JULIET enters, and she and FRIAR LAWRENCE, carrying the vial, exit through the chamber door.)

LIAM

Swounds! Didst pass the fabled Juliet?

HERO

Aye.

LIAM

How many years has she? Eleven? Twelve?

HERO

I would no longer make her your concern.
Would I had never doubted this good friar,
Whose convoluted plots yet value hold.
I see now how the path correct is not
A line, but may it bend and curve withal.

LIAM

This is a mighty turnaround in tone!

HERO

Soon Juliet will share my utter joy,
A journey back from bleakest land there is.
My happiness I cannot speak in words,
To know Messina be my home again.

LIAM

Would I could be Hero, if just for one day.

HERO

Still - Juliet already wedded be,
While I stand at the altar frozen still.
Do Claudio's late-born tears do him defense
Enough for me so quickly to forgive?
Or does this mischance much impel to court
Anew, and see if love might outbox death,
Or if 'tis solely death that eggs love on?
This scale now must I weigh ere I return.

LIAM

I find it fitting you should worry thus,
But think'st I that your tale will end in joy.
What kind of fool would Claudio be to spurn
This love that cometh from beyond the grave?
These tender cheeks, this visage fair, this smile
That must remind him of a summer's day?

HERO

(blushing)

You speak most kind to me. Pray, speak some more.

LIAM

This late news from Messina doth enforce
The Friar's wit in calculating plans.
If he doth dictate that your tale shall end
With happy wedding, doubt not that it will.
I would all stories might with wedding end,
For nothing more foretells a happy life.
Doubt not the hand of God in these events.
Fear not for Romeo and Juliet:
Imagine them enrapt in endless bliss,
Their lips entwined forever in a kiss.

(Blackout on stage. JULIET crosses the forestage,
looking nervous, carrying the vial.)

Scene 5

(Night. HERO, LIAM and FRIAR LAWRENCE enter
groggily through the friary door. LIAM
immediately collapses on a mat and sleeps.)

LIAM

You friars spend such energy in prayer
I know not how you manage through a week.
How canst you stay awake when you must rise

Twice every night the chapel to attend?

(FRIAR LAWRENCE walks over to his plants and picks a leaf off of one, handing it to LIAM.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Whene'er I doubt the Lord's benevolence
I chew a frond off of the coca plant.

(They chew. A knock. LIAM puts his hood up and opens the exterior door; FRIAR JOHN comes in. He holds a letter. He's upset and out of breath.)

FRIAR JOHN

Holy Franciscan friar! Brother, ho!

FRIAR LAWRENCE

This same should be the voice of Friar John.
Welcome from Mantua! What says Romeo?
Or, if his mind be writ, give me his letter.

FRIAR JOHN

Going to find a barefoot brother out,
One of our order, to associate me,
Here in this city visiting the sick,
And finding him, the searchers of the town,
Suspecting that we both were in a house
Where the infamous pestilence did reign,
Seal'd up the doors and would not let us forth.
So that my speed to Mantua there was stay'd.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Who bare my letter then to Romeo?

FRIAR JOHN

I could not send it-here it is again-
Nor get a messenger to bring it thee,
So fearful were they of infection.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Unhappy fortune! By my brotherhood,
The letter was not nice but full of charge,
Of dear import, and the neglecting it
May do much danger. Friar John, go hence,
Get me an iron crow, and bring it straight unto my
cell.

FRIAR JOHN

Brother, I'll go and bring it thee.

(FRIAR JOHN exits through the friary door.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Now must I to the monument alone,
Within this three hours will fair Juliet wake.
She will beshrew me much that Romeo
Hath had no notice of these accidents;
But I will write again to Mantua,
And keep her at my cell till Romeo come -
Poor living corse, clos'd in a dead man's tomb!

(FRIAR JOHN reenters and tosses FRIAR LAWRENCE a crowbar. FRIAR LAWRENCE exits through the exterior door, slamming it loudly behind him.
HERO gruffly rises.)

HERO

Wherefore this tumult? Did I miss something?

(No response from LIAM and FRIAR JOHN, who stand around dejectedly.)

LIAM

(to FRIAR JOHN)

I know no sleep will come to me tonight.
What might we do to pass these anxious hours?

HERO

You might begin by giving me details
Of what just happened here while I did sleep!

FRIAR JOHN

That sure will kill some time. Come gather here
And further tales may come to me withal.

(The three start to gather in a circle. Lights out on the cell. FRIAR LAWRENCE runs across the forestage looking determined, robe flapping, crowbar in hand.)

Scene 6

(FRIAR JOHN, HERO and LIAM sit around amiably swapping stories to pass the anxious hours.)

FRIAR JOHN

...So then this Duke, in friar's habit clothed,
Did scour Vienna's lower ranks to seek
One Mariana, who once Angelo
Had loved. She being found, he bid her take
The place of Isabella in his bed,
Thus might he save her threat'd maidenhead.
A clever gambit sure it was, and when
The Duke anon resumed his normal guise,
Their night of fornication he revealed,
Then ordered that the two should then be wed!
A whoreson cracking rogue was he, this duke!

(FRIAR JOHN and HERO laugh. LIAM looks perplexed.)

HERO

Compelling tales you tell, good Friar John.

LIAM

But how might this be staged? For any man
With sight and hearing blessed would certain note
A sudden swap of lovers in his bed!

FRIAR JOHN

Methinks the youngling scrutinize too hard.

(To LIAM)

Lad, needs you comprehend how a disguise
Might conquer empires, tempers and the heart.
This Viennese, through vestment, nothing more,
Doth disappear into the city streets.
From there, he kept a watch which no Duke could,
And in but weeks, did hatch him several
Contrivances by which he punished wrongs
And set his dukedom on a course past shoals
Of certain danger, safe to anchorage.
Look, even you do take on holy mask,
And sure you comprehend its benefit.
I think you e'en enjoy the masquerade.

HERO

There's naught more joy than putting on a mask,
To gaily make a stage of all the world.
Just think on Benedick and Beatrice,
My friends who were by machinations tricked
To deep and pow'rful love, although they did
Each other loathe and forswore ne'er to wed.

LIAM

So why together did you urge a pair,
In spirit being so mortally opposed?

HERO

But for the fun! Young Liam, why propose
All actions must some ration, reason hold?
Not all minds course anon on the same paths,
And some might act with no firm end in sight.
Indeed, when first my Claudio did woo,
'Twas done (I later learnt) by someone else.
A friend, Don Pedro, at a royal masque
Did take on Claudio's form. I know not why -
'Twas more dramatic thusly, I suppose.
I thought this much appealing at the hour
Though now I find I muse much o'er the act.
Was not I worth the toil of flow'ry words?

LIAM

Your matchless beauty, ma'am, would most undo
A man who look'ed to smother you with talk,
Gazing as like unto some blazing star -
Whose light doth all the heavens sanctify -
Each time he supplicated to thy brow.

FRIAR JOHN

(laughing, to HERO)

With turns of phrase he's abler than I thought.
To Claudio are you certain to return?
For here's a fellow most refined in speech,
His tongue does serve a banquet fanciful,
A feast of sweetmeats and a side of pith.

(Laughter.)

LIAM

(To FRIAR JOHN)

Pray speak some more, that might we pass the hour
Ere Friar Lawrence to this cell return
From his most frightened and unwelcome task.

HERO

But hold, dear Liam - we have not heard from you.
'Tis time you told a story of thine own,
Some masque or intrigue you yourself have spun.

(LIAM thinks a moment.)

LIAM

One day in grammar did I sneak a tack
Unto the teacher's seat before a class.
'Twas mighty bout of fun for all involved
When sat he did, and with a yelp he rose.

(Silence.)

FRIAR JOHN

Was that the narrative in sum and full?

(LIAM nods.)

HERO

Thou mightst a stronger version spin than that.

FRIAR JOHN

Perhaps the tack you placed had poison on't?
And teacher, when he then the culprit found,
Did stab you through the heart, then diest.
You could then die yourself: o'er half an hour
You stun the class with final eloquence,
Declare "the rest is silence" as you fall
And crumple abject in a bloody pool.

(HERO holds up the 'Tragedies" book.)

HERO

A goodly thought that is - but it's been done.

FRIAR JOHN

Perhaps this extant tale be better told
By following some minor character,
As like some courtesans, or e'en a friar,
Who skirt along the edges of events.

HERO

How trivial a way to spin a tale,
When nature has no lack of heroes bold.
What if yon schoolboy did, 'stead of a tack,
Spirit this cursed teacher to a boat,
Which then he shipwrecks on deserted isle.

FRIAR JOHN

A brother also wreck'd, hunched in his back,
Determin'd but to foment rack and ruin.
Then, after years, yon Liam in a storm
Does thereon crash, his only company
A portly and o'erbearing sot obsessed
With sack-

HERO

-At once beset he is by beasts
Which stand hard-favoured in their shape and thought,
Who from their victims hack a pound of flesh-

FRIAR JOHN

-But Liam smitten is with teacher's child,
Who doth command fair forest spir'ts and trolls-

HERO

-But also holds a cruelty in her soul,
And orders Liam slay his teacher-king,
That he might seize the island for his own-

FRIAR JOHN

-But this ploy stopped by teacher's other child,
Who also Liam loves, and would him woo-

HERO

-But only while disguised as a man!

FRIAR JOHN

Where is some parchment? We should write this down.

LIAM

Enough! Why wouldst thou make a place for Liam,
As player in his tales? That seems to me
But gazing at my navel, like to pat
Myself on my own back. These narratives
Do lead a fine existence on their own.
Let's let a story be; besides, I must
Confess this tack doth leave me much confused.
Why must your fantasies be so high-blown
With deviltry and gloom, disguise and tricks?
Who coulds't believe such things, when every day
Is merely a parade of common facts?

HERO

Why think'st thou then we stories tell at all?

FRIAR JOHN

Spyest thou a thing from 'neath yon hood?
Stand'st hidden in a foreign friary,
False robe about your person, even while
About you youths are married, nobles killed,
And women imitate their own demise.
Where are these common facts of which you speak?
I have not seen a one for many years,
Since ere the day this friar was my friend.
Survey the world around you, mark it well
And never shall you lack in tales to tell.

(A knock at the exterior door. FRIAR JOHN opens it. FRIAR LAWRENCE enters carrying the crowbar, dejectedly.)

FRIAR JOHN

What news? Where is the Juliet you sought?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Good John, I must profess, mistakes were made.
Star-crost, most surely, were these gentle youth
Who only wished a mingling of their souls
As duties sought to pull them from all sides.
(pause)

Dead are they both, snuffed out their too-brief lives,
When each the other found a seeming corse
They sought only a real corse to become.

(Everyone looks shocked. HERO buries her face in her hands. She is almost catatonically morose for a few minutes.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Swift Romeo outpaced me to the tomb,
His feet afire with impetus of love,
And found his new bride there, he thought, in death.
He swallowed down a potion not like mine,
For his a true and lasting end induced.
I came in time to hail poor Juliet
As she awoke, and sought to spirit her
Away, that I might add her to the stock
Of this already overflowing cell,
Then to a convent presently dispatch.
But I the tomb did flee, when heard'st a noise,

And from I know not where she found a knife
And stabbed herself. Died she upon a kiss,
Together with her Romeo (gestures upwards) in bliss.
I offered myself up for chastisement,
But, deemed a holy man, I was sent home.
Heav'n has worked in strange ways ere today,
Again anon it foils the will of men.
These losses though too dear, still yet at dawn,
In bloody churchyard did these Montagues
And Capulets, all sobered by the sight,
Pledge that this tragedy will end their feud.
For this we should give thanks and off'r prayers.

FRIAR JOHN

Was ever there a tale of greater woe?

LIAM

I cannot this digest. What did they do
To justify their flames extinct so quick,
When others with harm-doing, sullied minds
Do ripen to old age? It seems as though
This Romeo and this poor Juliet
Died not because of their weaknesses unseen,
As might Achilles or an Oedipus,
But just by random workings of events,
Poor choices made for their own claimed good.
What kind of end is this to such affect?
It seems the dice were loaded from the start,
Ere they exploded in each others' hearts.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

There was a place for them. But realize,
Liam, it was just that the time was wrong.
Hold back your wonder at these sad events.
Put in the Lord your faith-

LIAM

-I put my faith
In men, and they do falter every day.

(A knock. FRIAR JOHN gets it. It's a letter.)

FRIAR JOHN

This lately from Messina hath arriv'd.

(He hands it to HERO. She reads.)

HERO

It says my father hath decreed the day
Has come for my rebirth, Messina bound
Should I soon be, that I might Claudio join.
O'ertaken most by grief, he has concurred
To wed a woman he thinks Hero's kin.
This cousin, though, shall Hero be herself.

FRIAR JOHN

Oh happy news on such a cursed day.

LIAM

(to HERO)

Might I perhaps this missive also read?

(HERO hands LIAM the letter. He looks at the envelope.)

LIAM

"To Friar Francis," says this outer sheath.

FRIAR JOHN

When in Messina he that name does use.
After encounters with the bishop there,
Friar Lawrence cannot visit undisguis'd.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Nor seek me in Vienna by my name,
For there the Duke and I have had some words.

LIAM

(to HERO)

What say you, Hero? Doth this welcome word
Compel you now to Claudio and home?

(long pause.)

LIAM

Hero?

HERO

These Romeo and Juliet, I should
Have liked to have as guests at my own fete,
That their connub'l joy should bless mine own.
I would that I had headed off their deaths,
And might I have for certain had I spake.

Instead I but retreated modestly,
Demurely sat and humbly bit my tongue.
As ever have I done since I was born.

(HERO is snapping out of her catatonia.)

What good be words that are but left unsaid,
What use are thoughts which do not find a voice?
Whyfore this pageant do I abdicate,
And make a cameo in my own life?

(She picks up the "Tragedies" book.)

I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be,
Just an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince, no doubt an easy tool.
I constantly am ordered all about,
Beholden to the wills of everyone
Save me. No more. 'Tis time I take a stand.
I cannot idly on my backside lounge
As the events which me affect unfold
Determining the course of mine own life.
I plan to make a stand. And it defend.
Though I be right or wrong, fast will I stand,
'Gainst my controlling father most of all.
Thou lov'st thy name and privilege more than
Your own begotten daughter! Know thee this?
(She throws the book down.)
Pater, who dost thou love?! Thou lov'st thy rank!
Thou lov'st thy rank.

(silence.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Hast thou an ague? Are'st though in ill health?

HERO

Ne'er once have felt I so enspirited.

LIAM

Your speech most stirs me. But what whilst thou do?

HERO

I still see little choice. My name will still
Be black till my planned marriage I resume.
Events so set in motion by the fates
Are like a river in its ancient banks,
Impossible to stop up or divert.

This circumstance is written by a hand
We never see nor hope to understand.
Beside, I am by this epistle moved,
That Claudio would weep upon my loss,
And marry him a stranger in some hope
Her semblance to me make him consolate.
To him I shall return and shall forgive,
But ne'er will I this tragedy forget.
And ne'er will I resume my quiet life:
Where poor Ophelia whelm'd in discontent,
I only drown the worst part of myself.
If Claudio do hope I mold my form
To his, revolving 'bout him like a moon,
His will be an aspect of surprise
When this new-fash'ned Hero he acquaints,
This Hero brazen, Hero who will be
Lead actor on the stage of her own life.
A woman he may never hope to tame,
A Hero who at last fulfills her name.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

In this resolve much there is to admire,
For hours spent standing by are put to waste.

HERO

You, foolish friar, espouse that most of all!
But when you play the puppet master role,
Pulling the cords of people's destinies,
You leave them all in tangles and in knots.
Methinks you misconstrue your call to God,
The Lord you are to worship, not supplant.
Yet thy will not acknowledge thy mistakes,
Your flaws attributing to sacred will.
I will pronounce it clear: this was your fault.
If you needs clutch the strings of others' lives,
At least admit when you these leads have broke!

FRIAR JOHN

Your reputation has this friar saved,
And rescued probably your life moreo'er,
Has sheltered you in this, his private cell,
Though at the risk of banishment or worse.
Do not him castigate for where he erred,
Reflect instead on how he did succeed.

FRIAR LAWRENCE
(to FRIAR JOHN)

I thank you humbly for your kind defense.
I also would speak much on my behalf,
But think our hours now be better used
To act upon this letter lately sent.

(to HERO)

The vicar I expect will soon return,
And better be you gone before he comes.
Home to Messina now you should make haste,
And I will join you presently, for now
To leave Verona seems most ill-advised.
Friar John will make the way with you betimes.

FRIAR JOHN

I will my necessaries gather up.
Pray Hero, come with me to lend me aid.
And Friar Lawrence, give your hand as well.

(FRIAR JOHN, FRIAR LAWRENCE and HERO, her hood up, start to exit through the friary door. LIAM calls after FRIAR JOHN.)

LIAM

Friar John! A simple query need I make.
Didst ever letter from Messina hold
Prior to this which hath of late received?

FRIAR JOHN

Indeed I think not, this one was the first.
Of other have you heard?

LIAM

(gestures to FRIAR LAWRENCE)

Yes, from his mouth.

(FRIAR LAWRENCE walks toward LIAM so HERO cannot hear.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Remember, Liam, that the truth is not
Always a light to shine upon the world,
But also may blockade the righteous path.
Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied,
And vice sometimes by action dignified.

(Everyone exits, leaving LIAM alone.)

LIAM

What? Vice sometimes by action dignified?
When one would inconvenient truth obscure
To seal one's ends, that is no holy work.
I see how men invoke the name of God
And yet do what they please. Wherefore can one
Pledge lifelong fealty to a light divine,
Then fire up thine own torch at any time?
A Catholic was I raised, brought up to fear
And worship and obey. But was it all
Just pageant, fripperies, a mask to don?

(LIAM takes off the friar's robe.)

And what did faith and trust in Lord above
Gain Romeo? Fair Juliet? Their loyalty
Did make a coffin of their marriage bed,
A shroud out of their sheets but barely used.
From now on there should be no marriages!
I'll not a friar be, nor but a priest,
Nor even Catholic, nor Anglican.
A pox on both their churches, I declaim!
No more the high performance of the mass,
I'll mount a better masquerade myself.

(VICAR THOMAS walks in the friary door.)

VICAR THOMAS

The friar's foreign guest, I do assume.
Why dost though wear no habit in the cell?
Did cannibals engulf it for dessert?

(LIAM remains silent and puts the habit back on.
FRIAR LAWRENCE and HERO, her hood up, walk back
in.)

VICAR THOMAS

(to LIAM)

Dispense you may anon with this charade.

(to FRIAR LAWRENCE)

I have of course been through the streets today
Where noblemen and paupers weep alike
About the fate of lovers ta'en too soon.
I learn't then of the plann'd device of one
Judicious friar in my employ, who did

In seeking end to this great rivalry
Wed warring teens within this very cell!
What can'st thou tell me of this circumstance?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

'Tis as you spake. Keep also thee in mind
That Montagues and Capulets do plan
To reconcile their wrongs and forge ahead.

VICAR THOMAS

I sooner would expect the heathen hordes
To give unto us all Jerusalem,
And Christian men and Moors both occupy
The Holy Land in sacred harmony
Than last more than a week Verona's peace.
I cannot overlook your role in this,
For thou hast soiled the good name of the friars
And must accept your punishment withal.
I'll have you posted many miles away.
But first, I'll order every friary
At which you halt to place you in their stocks,
A pig's head o'er your own, and have at you
With scourge, that the abased peasants might
Have some small laugh at your deserv'd expense.
(gestures to LIAM and HERO)
As for your silent partners, get them gone.
In fifteen minutes I return with guards
To take you out with force away from here.

(VICAR THOMAS exits through the exterior door.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Dost everyone reject me? Be there not
A single mortal who condones my acts?

(to LIAM)

Is this my recompense for seeking good?
Pray you inform me: am I but a fool?

LIAM

I have endorsed you through this escapade.
But since you ask me straight, I'll answer blunt:
I side with Hero. Though I admire your will,
I cannot your mendacity abide,
And innocents who suffer from your ploys
Pay too outsized a price.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

What might I do
To earn a restoration of thy faith?

LIAM

I am afeared it is too late for that.
This sad affair has led to me to conclude
A friar's life would not enrobe me well.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Not be a friar? But think on what you'll lack.

HERO

Pig's heads and scourges, but to name a pair.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

What of your faith in me? Is that dead too?
To spark again your trust what must I do?

LIAM

Acknowledge that you erred, and that you will
No innocents imperil in your schemes.

(pause.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

The fault was mine. These deaths are on my head.
'Tis difficult to say, but 'tis the truth.
But cannot promise I to stay aloof
From problems which are dropped upon my stoop,
Nor pledge that those who turn to me for aid
Shall never by it land in jeopardy.
There is no great reward without great risk,
And what forlorn and dark charade is life
If lacking in intrigue and mystery?
Just ask this Hero, who hath conquered death
To, at her future wedding, don a mask
That all the sweeter might be her return.
Yet though I cannot on this point accede,
Still will I make this solemn pledge to you:
Henceforth I keep my potions to myself.

LIAM

I can digest the matter in your words,
And while I disagree, still find thee apt.
In my good graces do you stand.

HERO

And mine.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

But now our time grows short. Friend Hero, flee
with Friar John, who waits now at the coach.

HERO

(to FRIAR LAWRENCE)

I will obey, I pray recall me not
Just for my fury and incensed words.
Though I did wail at you, bear this in mind:
In death you brought me to a better life.

(to LIAM)

Young Liam, if a brother I did have,
I would he were a replica of you.

(She pulls up both her hood and his and speaks
quietly.)

As you have aided me to speak my mind,
I will unvarnished advice impart:
This cloak becomes you.

LIAM

I do not think't.

HERO

'Tis not because you like a friar seem;
But since you do belong in a disguise,
A hint of the fantastic on your face,
A play to be enacted in your eyes.

(HERO and LIAM kiss, a friendly peck that turns
into a long and passionate liplock that goes way
beyond a friendly goodbye. FRIAR JOHN walks back
in the exterior door and is aghast at the
apparent sight of two hooded friars kissing.)

FRIAR JOHN

Jesu!

(HERO and LIAM unclench and pull down their
hoods. Neither looks ashamed; just a bit
regretful that that's all there will be.)

LIAM
(smiling)

Better it is I am your brother not;
We would most indecorous siblings make.

HERO

Godspeed, dear friend. Remember well my name.

(HERO exits. LIAM turns to FRIAR LAWRENCE.)

LIAM

Now what about your fell predicament?
What whilst you do? If you but need my aid,
I could to England your untoward fate impart
And there might have you welcomed as a friend.

(LIAM grabs a piece of paper and a quill and scribbles something, then hands it to FRIAR LAWRENCE.)

LIAM

Here is my name in full, and where I live.

(FRIAR LAWRENCE reads it.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

'Tis better you will not a friar be.
With name like this, more suited are you for
Position working in a house of bawd.

LIAM

Far art thou from the first to make such jest.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Nor will I be the last, for I conceive
This be a name the world will speak anon.
I do needs call on you, but think the time
Too short for you to help me as you say.
I must ask quicker favor of you now.

LIAM

What should'st I do? But name and I'll obey.

(FRIAR LAWRENCE walks over to the lab and grabs a vial of the same potion he gave JULIET.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Henceforth I keep my potions to myself.

(FRIAR LAWRENCE drinks the potion and wipes his mouth. He grabs the crowbar and tosses it to LIAM.)

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Know' st the location of the Friars' tomb?
I need you there in just about three days.

(Blackout. Four FRIARS carry a coffin across the forestage. They are trailed by FRIAR JOHN, who stops midstage and is spotlit.)

FRIAR JOHN

The Friar did this petty Hamlet fly,
And lived anon to meddle him some more;
Whilst Romeo and Juliet do lie
Beneath a fragile peace which might endure.
Good Hero did to Claudio return,
And married him the second time around;
Her visage still in Liam's mem'ry burns,
Though soon he sowed his seed on English ground.
Measure for Measure, this sad tale do end,
Though About Nothing Much Ado it seems;
It formed a Tempest in young Liam's mind

(Light up on LIAM in the cell, scribbling furiously.)

Like vestige of some queer Midsummer Dream.
Still these events compel him from afar,
His thoughts drawn to this friar and his bar.

(FRIAR JOHN unveils the crowbar from beneath his robe. Liam looks at him. Blackout. End of Play.)