

SHAKESPEARE'S TEACHER

by Alan Holman,
Ed Heidt,
and Kim Hitchings.

STORY

Ed Heidt

SCRIPT

Alan Holman

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

Kim Hitchings

This is Alan Holman's revision of SHAKESPEARE'S TEACHER, a play originally conceived by Ed Heidt. All necessary permissions have been granted, and the copyright holder of this revision is Alan Holman. Included is material from the original stageplay version of "Shakespeare's Teacher" by Ed Heidt, as performed by the Newman Players, in Saint Thomas Moore College in Saskatoon Saskatchewan, Canada; also included is material from the Fringe Festival draft of "Shakespeare's Teacher" by Ed Heidt and Kim Hitchings, as performed by the Newman Players, throughout the Canadian Fringe Festival Circuit; also included is material from a Fringe Festival draft of "Shakespeare's Teacher" by Ed Heidt and Alan Holman, as performed by the Newman Players in Winnipeg Manitoba, Canada.

INT. BIG GYM, SHADY BROOK HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

MR. BEND, an English teacher, is sitting on the bleachers, watching BILL rehearse a play.

BILL is a fifteen year old, British boy who is giving an animated performance in the middle of the almost-empty gym.

BILL

...and when all the other children got to their homes, their parents read the stories that were written all over their clothes. And they laughed, and cried, and puzzled, and played together, so much that they all forgot about dinner on the stove. They all went to sleep, and dreamt that they had Portia's pencil.

MR. BEND appreciatively jumps from the bleachers, shakes BILL's hand, and congratulates him, enthusiastically.

MR. BEND

That was wonderful!

BILL improvises, enthusiastically.

BILL

I am a suspension of disbelief. For I am: the one who knows nature by name and might. The one who kings sought after for delight. The bard of times lost by the longest night. William Shakespeare, reborn, for your delight!

MR. BEND laughs.

MR. BEND

You're Shakespeare, and I'm his teacher. First one to break character is the loser.

BILL

The game is afoot.

They laugh.

MR. BEND

You should be an actor.

BILL

I don't think they're going to like it.

INT. MR. BEND'S CLASSROOM, SHADY BROOK HIGH SCHOOL

MR. BEND and BILL are the only two people in the classroom.

A script titled "Portia's Pencil" is on the teacher's desk.

MR. BEND

Maybe you'd do better as a writer.

BILL

I'm already a writer; head of the screenwriting club, actually, but writing is a horrible habit. I'd prefer to be a teacher!

MR. BEND

Oh?

BILL

Grammar, me! -- teach, want to do. That's why you're my imaginary friend.

MR. BEND chuckles.

MR. BEND

You -- a teacher? You don't even like school.

BILL

I don't like my current english teacher.

MR. BEND

Really, why?

BILL

Her face looks like an ass.

MR. BEND

Oh, you're talking about Mrs. Buttinski -- yeah, we also make fun of her in the staff lounge. We call her "assface."

BILL

That's her name, don't wear it out!

MR. BEND

That brings me to a question about your Portia's Pencil story.

BILL

Shoot.

MR. BEND

Why would you put your teacher and the principal in a psychiatric institution in your story?

BILL

Because that's where they belong.

MR. BEND thinks for a while, and taps his finger on his desk.
BILL seems lost in his mind.

MR. BEND

Maybe I could play the teacher!

BILL

No. I don't type-cast. I'll play all the parts.

MR. BEND

That could be risky.

BILL

I know. With the entire school's attention, this performance is pivotal to my reputation.

MR. BEND

Are you going to stand in one place, or move around?
Who's directing you?

BILL

I don't know. I haven't even got the rascal memorized yet.

MR. BEND

What kind of pencil are you going to use? A huge, psychedelic pencil, one with a giant feathered plume, a phallus?

BILL looks disgusted.

BILL

No, a pencil of the mind!

MR. BEND

Oh, I see: Imagination. So, what will you do after high school?

BILL

I already said it -- I want to get into the system, and change it, as a teacher like you.

MR. BEND

You can't be a teacher like me. You have to be the teacher you are. However, writers are the best subversives, so anything's possible. But are you still cutting classes?

BILL looks aggravated, as if he was suddenly caught off guard.

BILL

What!?! I don't even wear glasses; if I did, how would I cut them? "You can't give nemo...quod no..."????

MR. BEND

Nemo dat quod non habet.

BILL

Yeah. That's it.

MR. BEND

You can't give what you haven't got.

BILL

Of course. Life isn't long enough for quadratic equations; I'd rather read the classics.

MR. BEND

What else don't you like about school?

BILL

A lot of things. But I liked your class.

MR. BEND looks happy.

MR. BEND

That's because my class doesn't suck.

BILL

One part sucked.

MR. BEND almost looks indignant.

MR. BEND

Oh? And what part was that?

BILL

Memorizing Latin; it's Greek to me.

MR. BEND

But it was a Latin class. In Latin class, you memorize Latin.

BILL

Yeah. Shio, shis, shit.

MR. BEND

It's skee-oh, skiss, skit!

BILL

Shimis, shitis, shunt.

MR. BEND

Skimus, skitis, scunt!

BILL

Scunt in titus skirtus!

MR. BEND

Bam, bas, bat.

BILL

Bahmus, bahtus, bahnt.

MR. BEND

Boe, bis, bit.

BILL

Beamus, beatis, bundt, HA! When you taught us, it was fun!

MR. BEND

It was fun, wasn't it?

BILL

(nods)

Yeah. Too bad they don't even teach latin anymore.

MR. BEND starts to sing.

MR. BEND

C'mon everybody and conjugate latin...

BILL

I want to be in your english class again.

MR. BEND

Now you're in my Latin class.

BILL

Unofficially.

MR. BEND

Co-operate with your new teacher, and be like the other kids.

BILL looks annoyed.

BILL

Be like the other kids. Co-operate. Sit quietly. Sit up straight. Don't talk. Rows straight. Do what you're told. Put down that pencil. Zip that pack up. Yeah, school sucks it. Anyhoo, at school, we never think, never learn. Never do anything, except of course in my mind. And if it weren't for the possibility of doodling on the page, and in the margins, I'd be nothing. God knows they don't actually teach us anything. Invasion of the body snatchers.

MR. BEND

That's your teacher's method.

BILL imitates a mean, yet boring teacher...

BILL

When was the war of 1812? Anyone? How long was the hundred years war? Anyone? What were the causes of the war of 1510? Anyone? What were the effects of the hundred years war? Anyone? Which city did Debbie do? Anyone? At least you let us discuss freely, and choose for ourselves.

MR. BEND

I want you to make up your own minds.

BILL

I take that back. Free discussions conclude within the range where the average participant can still comprehend the conclusion. The greater truths beyond the conclusion are left undiscovered. And I'd rather have the apex of human knowledge, on any given subject, drilled into my brain by strict teachers, through repetition and stuff, than to choose for myself.

(thoughtful pause)

Textbooks don't contain the apex of human knowledge on their subjects. The apex of knowledge, on a subject, is power over the people who are passionate about that subject. If anyone could have any information they wanted, Kings would be de-throned, Popes would be de-frocked, Presidents and Prime Ministers would be forced back to their home-world -- we'd all be on an equal playing field, distinguishable only by our talents.

And for that reason, our talents would be celebrated and encouraged way more, and there'd be less suppression, and more celebration of people who distinguish themselves, more encouragement of true accomplishments. And more team-work, because if everyone had access to the apex of knowledge on their subjects of personal interest, then there'd be bigger teams for finding new apexes. Rather than this my truth is preferable over your truth bullshit, everyone would be more focused on THE truth. Less chaos. Chaos like my unsent letters to Anne.

MR. BEND

Is Anne a girl?

BILL

Of course Anne's a girl. She wouldn't be a ...
(gags)
... boy.

MR. BEND

You're in trouble with your father, aren't you?

BILL

Why do you ask?

MR. BEND

Are you?

BILL

Old John has too much to drink. He started asking me what your interest in me is, why I come here all the time, so I told him, "It's not his interest in me, it's mine in what he knows."

MR. BEND

Your father thinks I'm a bad influence on you. He doesn't want you to come here.

BILL

My father doesn't want me to be a writer, and he most certainly doesn't want me to be a teacher.

MR. BEND

You're going to be a writer.

BILL

I don't want to be a writer. I want to write when I want to write, but I don't want to only write. I just want to be me.

MR. BEND

Come on: tell me what you've been working on lately, besides "Portia's Pencil". How's your writing going?

BILL

Oh, I've got manuscripts, and isolated scenes, scattered all over my bedroom floor; mostly morality plays peopled with royalty, and idiots -- same thing. I have a character who speaks only Latin.

MR. BEND

Let me see your script.

BILL hands the script to MR. BEND.

MR. BEND reads for a while.

MR. BEND

Satis quid sufficit.

BILL

I praise you, sir. Your wit and reason in class were sharp without scurrility, audacious yet not impudent; that's a pretty good fake translation of what you just read, eh? All great writers tap into the same psychic well of the truth.

MR. BEND

Novi hominem tamquam te.

BILL

A most popular, and choice, epithet; that's a free, yet horrible translation. Reminds me of the exorcist -- like, remember that scene in which the priest screamed, "The power of Christ compels you!"?

MR. BEND nods.

MR. BEND

Potestas Christi compelle te. He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument. Ne intelligis, domine?

BILL

Are you insulting me, Mr. Bend?

MR. BEND

Laus Deo, bone intelligo.

BILL

You're insulting me.

MR. BEND

Videsne quis vinit. Video et gaudeo.

BILL

Feedem shit.

MR. BEND searches the script for those words.

MR. BEND

What? Huh? I beg your pardon?

BILL

Feed 'em shit. You know: he, she, or it knows the faith!

MR. BEND

You mean fiden skit!

BILL

Whatever. Anyhoo, what is a, b spelled backwards?

MR. BEND

BA - pueritia.

BILL

Um, wouldn't it be interesting if you you educated youth, in Latin, on top of a mountain?

MR. BEND

Sur la mons, as they say. Sans question.

BILL

Precisely, mons. Sans question.

MR. BEND

Honor.

BILL

What?

MR. BEND

Repeat after me: honor.

BILL

Alright, whatever. Honor.

MR. BEND

Honorific.

BILL

Honorific.

MR. BEND

Honorificable.

BILL

Honorificable

MR. BEND

Honorificable-itude.

BILL

Honorificable-itude.

MR. BEND

Honorificable-itude-in knee ta.

BILL

Honorificable-itude-in knee ta. Anita's hot...

MR. BEND

Honorificable-itude-in knee ta tee-bus.

BILL

Honorificable-itude-in knee ta tee bus. I needa' da bus for catching to school in da mornin', duh?

MR. BEND

You're missing the point.

BILL

Supercalifragilisticexpalidocious.

MR. BEND

And backwards, that's "docious-ali-istic-fragi-cali-rupus", but that's going a bit too far, wouldn't you say?

BILL

It's testing my intestinal fortitude.

MR. BEND

Well, I'm sure you'll use all of these in scenes someday...

BILL

Not unless I pass my english competency test next week.

MR. BEND

The what?

BILL

Everybody has to take this test, to see if they can read and write english at a "passable" level.

MR. BEND

Oh, yes, I heard about that. I remember a few years back, we had to grade all these tests for competency. Each teacher had to grade exactly the same way, using the same standards, or rubrics, I think they were called. They were essays on the environment, if I remember correctly.

BILL

And a business letter.

MR. BEND

And some Latin grammar!

BILL

And mystical choice.

MR. BEND

Multiple choice.

BILL

Mystical guess.

MR. BEND

Fill in the blanks.

BILL

Match the part of speech.

MR. BEND

With its definition.

BILL

And give two examples.

MR. BEND

Then diagram the sentence.

BILL

In Latin.

MR. BEND

And tell if it's a simple sentence.

BILL

Or a compound sentence.

MR. BEND

Or a compound-complex sentence.

BILL

Or a simple-compound-complex sentence.

MR. BEND

Or a compound-complex with a simple attachment.

BILL

Or a simple, compounded by a complex.

MR. BEND

Or a complex, with a simple, and a compound,
hidden...somewhere.

BILL

All joined by a subordinating, co-ordinating conjunction.
Or was that a subordinating-co-coordinating conjunction?

MR. BEND

Creating a noun clause.

BOTH

Whew!

MR. BEND

My dear students, let me trace for you the source of our educational system. Many generations ago, the world was filled with all kinds of thinkers. In fact, most people were thinkers.

BILL

But their minds got trapped by manipulative people -- if they can be called people -- who invented religions and politics.

MR. BEND

And schools.

BILL

Really?

MR. BEND

Raise your hand if you have a question.

BILL

No. I'll ask what I want, when I must.

MR. BEND

So the world was filled with thinkers. Thinking became circular, and they'd end up back where they started; like re-inventing the wheel sort of thing. What they really wanted to do was fly kites and watch the birds down by the river, and look at the stars at night.

BILL

That way their heads don't hurt.

MR. BEND

You're very observant. Now perhaps you'll pass if you'd begin showing up for tests.

BILL

Perhaps.

MR. BEND

Thinkers. So as a great favor to us, thinkers created this sure-fire education system, which we have to this day, that pays good money and doesn't influence thought; why it doesn't even CAUSE thought.

BILL

What?

MR. BEND

So now everybody can stop thinking, and enjoy nature, athletics, aesthetics, television, and nipples.

BILL

If that's the point, then why is there so much homework?

MR. BEND

So you'll be out of your dads way while he enjoys nipples.

BILL

I like nipples too.

MR. BEND

The problem is: thinkers can't be stopped; I'm one, and you can't stop me. We, me, you, I, he, she, they, them, et cetera. Thinkers pop up all over the place -- nonconformists -- because I insist on thinking, questioning the system. Subversive thinkers like myself grade and pass each other so some of them get through the system; some do in fact slip through the system from the bottom of the pile to the top of the heap. But it's if you think about stuff you're not supposed to think about, you get hassled, you escape to watching TV, and your brain reverts back to its Pavlovian non-thinking state.

Pause.

MR. BEND

I went to an opera the other day. Some guy came out on the stage and summarized the whole story before the show started and then told us it was also summarized in our programs. What I watched for three and a half hours wasn't much better than the summary, and the summary wasn't even half a page long.

(pause)

But the subversives are out there -- mopping floors and mopping up after sloppy children and learning the hollow basics for their competency tests like where Stratford is or what conformity is, or what a great education system we've

got. Why do they think that if we know all this stuff, if we got the system cased, then we're competent and educated? Huh? Now let's learn some Latin. Open your books to page number...but I digress. I've got to take a competence test too, to see if they'll re-hire me.

BILL

Same crap, different pile. You've been teaching thirty years; you're the best teacher I ever had.

MR. BEND

Big pay raise that'll get me.

BILL

What's on your test?

MR. BEND

A business letter, and an essay on the environment.

MR. BEND rifles through a file folder.

MR. BEND

Oh, here it is. Look at this.

MR. BEND hands a paper to BILL, which BILL reads from.

BILL

Interest in professional development? What's that?

MR. BEND

Um, teacher workshops.

BILL

Mastery of curriculum?

MR. BEND

You know: a business letter and an essay on the environment.

BILL

Submission of professional growth plans?

MR. BEND

More like suppression of personal growth plans.

BILL

Grasp of the basic skills of Latin grammar?

BOTH

Shio, shis, SHIT!

BILL

Able to handle increased emphasis in math and science?

MR. BEND

Lesson plans! Rubrics! The quadratic equation! All that wonderful stuff that makes the world all pretty and manageable! Did you know there are 293 ways to make change for a dollar?

BILL

Classroom management?

MR. BEND

You know: sit quietly, sit up straight, don't talk. Rows straight. Do what you're told. Put down that pencil.

Never think. Never learn. Never do anything. Invasion of the body snatchers.

BILL

What about whether your students like you?

MR. BEND

Rapport with students.

BILL

What's that?

MR. BEND

I don't know. All I know is that this material overwhelms and exhausts me. They want me to be like all the other teachers; you know, quality control, like products on an assembly line. Like you said: same crap, different pile. Look at this pro-development summer program they want me to attend.

BILL

What about it?

MR. BEND takes the sheet of paper back from BILL and reads from it.

MR. BEND

Participants, that's me, will have a chance to have daily individual conferences with their master teachers, they will have daily conferences with their own students, which their master teacher will observe. They will take three, ongoing seminars, in "The Teaching of Writing", "The Teaching of Literature", and "Pedagogical-Critical

Theory" which their master teachers will supervise.

BILL

What's a pedagogical-critical-theory?

MR. BEND

Nap-time.

BILL

I see.

MR. BEND continues reading.

MR. BEND

They will have a daily seminar with three other participants, during which they will develop daily, and weekly, lesson plans, draw up the overall syllabi, and coordinate, and critique, grading practices.

Participants who are unwilling, or otherwise unable, to submit to this tight sequence of masturba-...master-teacher observ-bation, or who seem to otherwise be unprepared to do so, will not be admitted to the program.

BILL

What are you going to do?

MR. BEND

I have to jump through the hoops like you. I don't know.

Pause.

MR. BEND

The headmaster has suggested that I think about assisted, early retirement.

BILL

I don't want you to retire.

MR. BEND

I also don't want to retire either, but what else would I do?

BILL

Teach.

MR. BEND

Let's both be teachers at the same time!

BILL

The magic, the mystery, the fun, the chaos. Portia's Pencil all over the class-room!

MR. BEND

Are you really going to do that in your play? -- have the pencil write all over the classroom? Do you really want that to happen?

BILL

Well. Not really, really! But sure. Wouldn't it be great if students were free to write as much as they wanted, when they wanted, how they wanted?

MR. BEND

I suppose; it makes writing fun. But I'll take the leap.

BILL is taken aback, and concerned.

BILL

What leap?

MR. BEND

Retire!! Leave teaching to the freshly "educated".

BILL

Because you pass a test, you're educated?

MR. BEND nods.

BILL

Because you can conjugate an irregular verb?

MR. BEND nods.

BILL

Or know that peanuts are one of the ingredients in dynamite?

MR. BEND

Or name the capitals of the countries of the world?

BILL

Or name the countries?

MR. BEND

Or know that no English word rhymes with month, orange, silver or purple, and the word "dreamt" is the only English word that ends in "mt."

BILL

The game is afoot.

MR. BEND nods knowingly.

BILL

Or tell who set what record when, or where Stratford is?
Or a shark is the only fish that can blink with both eyes,
and a cat has thirty-two muscles in each ear.

MR. BEND

Fill in the blank: the average person's left hand does 56% of
the...

BILL

...typing! "Stewardesses" is the longest word that is typed
only with the left hand. A dragonfly has a lifespan of 24
hours, then it plays kamikaze with a car-window.

MR. BEND

A goldfish has a memory span...

BILL

...of three seconds.

Pause.

BILL

A dime has 118 ridges around its circumference.

MR. BEND

There are 336 dimples...

BILL

...on a regulation golf ball. In merry old England, the speaker of the house...

MR. BEND

...is not allowed to speak. I think it's all about back to basics. Rubber bands last longer...

BILL

...when refrigerated.

Pause.

BILL

None of those things are real education. Education comes from within yourself. School separates us from true knowledge, true wisdom, true truths.

MR. BEND

The public and the politicians seem to feel that the children don't know their basics...and they feel some teachers don't know their basics either.

BILL

Knowing the basics means knowing a lot of unconnected trivia. Almonds are a member of the...

BOTH

...PEACH FAMILY!!!

MR. BEND

Well, if we each pass our competency tests, then we receive the stamp of approval; you're educated and I'm a competent teacher.

BILL

Knowing all this trivia is education?

MR. BEND nods.

BILL

No it's not. They're leashing robots.

MR. BEND

It's not trivia; it's basics. Two-thirds of the world's eggplants ARE grown...

BILL

...IN NEW JERSEY! We're leashed robots! I've learned more from my friendship with you than all my classes put together.

MR. BEND

That's because you're motivated, and that gives me the desire to teach you. We have a strong friendship, and we care about each-other's progress and livelihood.

BILL

I'm motivated to learn because Anne digs smart guys.

MR. BEND

I'm motivated to teach you because I want you to succeed and do well.

BILL

And I want you to succeed and do well.

MR. BEND

We'll grade each other's competency tests...

BOTH

...AND PASS EACH OTHER!

MR. BEND

You know: I really think that this is what teaching is: a one-on-one personal relationship between a teacher and a student.

BILL

Friendship.

MR. BEND

You know: like Plato's socratic dialogues. My classes are so big I hardly know any of my students.

BILL

Sad.

MR. BEND

What was that platonic dialogue about love called?

BILL

The Langoliers...The Gondoliers???? What time is it? The Symposium!

MR. BEND

Yes, the Symposium; it says that when you are in love, you are experiencing your own lack -- you desire what you don't -- or can't- have, and you see it in the other.

BILL

Your point?

MR. BEND

You can't desire something you already have, do you see?

BILL

But you can cram it fast and hard into someone who desires it.

MR. BEND

Oh yes, certainly. One can give to another who hasn't got.

BILL

And no one can give what he hasn't got.

MR. BEND

Nemo dat quod non habet.

BILL

I want to teach like you. Like Socrates! Wasn't he a geek, Greek god or something?

MR. BEND

He was an ancient GREEK philosopher. But as long as things continue as they are, me and old Socrates are out of a job.

BILL

What?

MR. BEND

How many times must I tell you? They want me to retire!!!

BILL

Shitty.

MR. BEND

Shitty's right. Saves me the embarrassment of failing the test, though. Did you know that the longest one-syllable word in the English language is "screched?"

BILL

Of course I knew that.

MR. BEND

And I just teach it, for now, until I'm let go of. They want to get rid of me with as much dignity as they can muster.

BILL

Who cares what "The Man" thinks or "The Machine" does? Who cares about "Them"? Let them eat cake.

MR. BEND

My headmaster is "Them." My headmaster's "The Man" representing "The Machine" which wants me to...umm...not eat cake.

BILL

I hate the French.

MR. BEND

My headmaster, a homosexual frenchman -- he wants to meet with me Monday morning to discuss the retirement package. So, I guess I'll stop teaching.

BILL
What'll you do?

MR. BEND
I'll retire! I'll do something else. I'll widdle, or make sweaters.

BILL
What if you cut yourself?

MR. BEND
I'll be an actor!

BILL
You're too old to start that.

MR. BEND
A writer!

BILL
No steady income, unless you sell out to "The Man."

MR. BEND
Then I'll be a subversive; there's money in that! What are you going to do if you fail YOUR competency test?

BILL
I don't know. But anyone who cares to learn whether I'll pass or fail should watch our next exciting episode!

MR. BEND

You're right. It is getting late.

BILL

Have you ever had a girlfriend, Mr. Bend?

MR. BEND

Why do you ask?

BILL

Because -- and don't take offense -- ...umm...just answer the question.

MR. BEND

Well, I'm not offended. I remember when first my eyes met hers.

BILL

Tell me about it.

MR. BEND

I used to go meet her when we were by ourselves after school. I quite expected to hear some of those sweet nothings that lovers whisper when they are by themselves, all alone, and I liked the idea of that. But it seemed as if it never happened for the longest time. She'd go on talking just the same as usual until it was time for her to go. So I suggested we should go to the gym and work out together, thinking that something was bound to happen there.

BILL

So did you two "do it"?

MR. BEND

I wanted to, but would you believe it: we exercised and wrestled with each other time and again, with not a soul in sight and I still got no further.

BILL

Harsh. So what did you do?

MR. BEND

A hand, then I asked her for dinner.

BILL

Did she show up?

MR. BEND

Yes. She came to dinner, ate and left. She left before I could summon the courage to invite her to spend the night.

BILL

You tried again, right?

MR. BEND

Yup, and the next time, I conspired to keep her talking after dinner, and that time our conversation lasted far on into the night and then when she said she must be going, I told her it was much too late and pressed her to stay the night with me.

BILL

I hope this story has a happy ending. I hope she stayed with you. What happened?

MR. BEND

Well, she turned in on the couch beside me, and the two of us had the room to ourselves.

BILL

So, umm, continue?

MR. BEND

Well, it's complicated; you see, when the lights were out, I made up my mind to stop beating about the bush and tell her, point-blank, that I wanted to make love to her.

BILL

How could she not realize that your intention was sex if you were laying down right next to her?

MR. BEND

Well, she had always viewed me as a platonic friend up until that moment. So I nudged her, and said, "Petra, are you asleep?"

BILL

Are you talking about the Petra we know?

MR. BEND nods.

BILL

I thought you said that you were talking about your wife.

MR. BEND

I never said that.

BILL

What happened?

MR. BEND

She wasn't asleep, so I told her that she was the only lover I've ever had who's been really worthy of me. She looked confused for a second, but I kept telling myself to go for it because if there was one thing I was keen about, it was to make the best of myself, and I figured that she, a perfect woman, was more likely than anyone else to help me to make the best of myself.

BILL

What time is it?

MR. BEND

Petra agreed that if I thought she had some kind of power that would make me better, then I also must have thought that she was beautiful and good.

BILL

So, that means you told...

MR. BEND

But she cautioned me not to barter my own beauty and goodness for ...

BILL

Isn't she married?

MR. BEND

Yes.

BILL

Anacrusis Omphaloskepsis Arete.

MR. BEND

What?

BILL

Never mind.

MR. BEND

We're avoiding the issue.

BILL

What issue? I've looked at every issue since I renewed my subscription -- I only look at the pictures. Oh, you mean my dramatic presentation.

MR. BEND

Your father is the issue which you're avoiding.

BILL

Oh, him. Why do you have to keep bringing him up?

MR. BEND

You can't fight him.

BILL

Neither should you.

MR. BEND

Your father wants what's best with you, and that's why he's concerned about the amount of time you spend with me.

BILL

Is there a reason for him to be concerned?

MR. BEND

Absolutely not.

BILL

Then I'll just lie...umm...lie...brary...library! I'll tell him I'm going to the library.

MR. BEND

Never lie. Always tell the truth.

BILL

This, from the guy who claimed that Petra was his wife.

MR. BEND

Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive.

BILL

I've gotta write that down.

MR. BEND

Don't; it's not the real deal. You're the real deal.

BILL

Remember that game we tried to play?

MR. BEND

The one where we model our lives after those of Shakespeare and his teacher?

MR. BEND

We didn't take it seriously.

BILL

I don't know about that; you see, I was about to mention how my being the president of the high school's screenwriting club is my way of modeling myself after Shakespeare.

MR. BEND

Model your life after yourself; it's the only way to be true to yourself.

BILL

Being true to myself -- since I want to be the best -- means being true to the best.

MR. BEND

The thing that will keep your writing real is your honesty.

BILL

How can a written work of fiction resemble reality?

MR. BEND

It's called "real writing."

BILL

Real writing?

MR. BEND

Real writing.

BILL

Writing real?

MR. BEND

True writing.

BILL

True?

MR. BEND

And if true, then it can not help but be beautiful.

BILL

Anne's a lying slut, but she's still beautiful.

MR. BEND

Huh?

BILL

I don't know what I'm saying anymore. I'm getting too tired, and too many crazy ideas are popping into my head -
- me with no word processor near-by.

Pause.

BILL

What's beauty? What's truth?

MR. BEND

Ah, said Pilate to Christ.

BILL

Who?

MR. BEND

But when Christ was crucified...

BILL

IF Christ was crucified.

MR. BEND

We know for scientific fact that Christ existed.

BILL

Christian scientists.

MR. BEND

And we know that he was crucified.

BILL

If you say so.

MR. BEND

He testified ... Actually, this happened before he was crucified: he testified that all he was doing was telling the truth. And Pilate retorted: "What is truth?"

BILL

Good question. What is truth?

MR. BEND

Well, I suppose it's YOUR truth; as you see it, as you tell it.

BILL

Truth is truth, whether I know it or not. He's a drunk.

MR. BEND

What does that mean?

BILL

My father wants me to be a doctor, and I'm not going to be a doctor, and I'm not in the library.

MR. BEND

Well, maybe you'd better get there. You don't want to anger him.

BILL

Why not?

MR. BEND

Because you'll just cause another explosion.

BILL

So?

MR. BEND

You need him.

BILL

For what?

MR. BEND

I've heard good things about him; besides, he raised you to be who you are, didn't he?

BILL

I guess.

MR. BEND

You need him.

BILL

I only need myself, and friends, and Anne. Not a hopeless drunk.

MR. BEND

From what I've heard, the man is NOT hopeless; besides, do you think that I have some kind of power to bring out the best in you?

BILL

I do.

MR. BEND

Do you think that I am kind and good?

BILL

Kinda.

MR. BEND

If I may digress...

BILL

Your digression is my digestion.

MR. BEND

Huh? Anyway, if there was one thing that myself and Petra were keen on, it was to make the best of ourselves, so she ended up falling in love with a better man, one whom I can't compete with: a motivational speaker.

BILL

Continue your digress-gestation, or whatnot; it motivates me.

MR. BEND

However, at the time, she agreed that if I thought she had some kind of power that would make me better, then I also must have thought that she was beautiful and good; a valid assumption, one which you must learn to make in your own relationships, whether platonic, aquaintic, associatic or romantic.

BILL

Did you just make up the words aquaintic and associatic?

MR. BEND

Perhaps. She cautioned me not to barter my own beauty and/or goodness for any of those same traits which I might have thought I saw or found in her. Doesn't that make you want to take psychology when you go to college?

BILL

Almost.

MR. BEND

For you see that though that barter might be an exchange of a semblance of beauty, all of it may have originated from within myself anyway.

BILL

Who'da guessed?

MR. BEND

With the conundrum in mind, I wrapped my cloak around her, and crept under with her -- she seemed to enjoy the warmth, as did I.

MR. BEND wipes his eye.

MR. BEND

I laid there all night with this extraordinary goddess of a woman in my arms...

BILL

Congrats.

MR. BEND

...and I woke up in admiration of her self-control.

BILL

So...did you ever make out with Petra?

MR. BEND

I still wanted to find ways to attract her to me, so we...

BILL

Make a long story short, please.

MR. BEND

It never happened.

BILL

Great composers of verse, such as us, can never do well with the ladies.

MR. BEND

It's as if God himself has cursed the versed.

BILL

There's still hope for you.

MR. BEND

And there's much more hope for you.

BILL

No.

MR. BEND

Yes there is, Bill.

BILL

I don't think so.

MR. BEND

Why not?

BILL

Like you, I spend most of my time in the library, swimming in the depths of good books, barely to emerge into the real world for fresh breaths of proper socialization.

MR. BEND

But didn't you tell me earlier that you DO have SOME friends, Bill?

BILL

Yes, I have friends, but none of them are female.

MR. BEND

To quote classic literature's beloved Fonz, "One can-not pick up chicks in a book."

BILL

Did he say that?

MR. BEND

Probably.

BILL

I've studied the library's material on women, and I believe that my play's subtexual implications about feminine struggles might help me to, how fonz says, "pick up a chick."

MR. BEND

So let me get this straight. You are using your dramatic presentation called PORTIA'S PENCIL as a way to tell women that you understand them, in hopes that it may help one of them -- the one named Anne -- to approach you?

BILL

Exactly.

MR. BEND

Well, it's creative, I'll give you that.

BILL

I hope it ends up working.

MR. BEND

And for the sake of vicariousness, I hope it works out for you as well.

BILL

Thanks. If it doesn't work, I'll type the word "seduction" into google, and read everything I find.

MR. BEND

Sometimes I want to hit you, but your goals are admirable. Good luck.

BILL

Luck rocks ... when it's good.

MR. BEND

You must come to see your own talent and power in yourself. Don't trade mine for yours.

BILL

Huh? Yeah, sure.

MR. BEND

I'm talking about oration.

BILL

Sorry. Yes, your orative aptitude compelled me to seek your coaching for my PORTIA'S PENCIL project.

MR. BEND

Just remember not to trade my power for yours.

BILL

What?

MR. BEND

If you trade my orative power for yours, you are simply mimicking my talent and power, when in fact you are meant to be discovering your own. When you see someone else's talent, you are seeing it second hand. When you experience your own talent in yourself, it is real. You can not experience my talent like I do. Only I can experience my talent like I do. So you must experience, but first find, your talent, like you do, because you can only experience talent in yourself, and I know I can help you.

BILL

But empathy, sympathy, and telepathy, help me to experience your talent.

MR. BEND

But you don't have telepathic powers.

BILL

Being in the room as you speak masterfully is one way of experiencing your talent.

MR. BEND

That's telepathetic. Your screenwriting club will be proud.

BILL

About that... I'm actually not really a member of the screenwriting club. I lied because I need club affiliation in order to get my presentation into next week's assembly. Is that alright with you?

MR. BEND

I wrote on my overtime form that I was helping an extra-

curricular group with a presentation.

BILL

There is no screenwriting club.

MR. BEND

Well, now there is!

BILL

When Principal Brutus announces in front of the entire school that I am representing the Screenwriting club in my presentation of PORTIA'S PENCIL, the entire screenwriting club will hate me for misrepresenting them.

MR. BEND

Bill: the entire Screenwriting club is YOU. But I'm running that assembly anyway, so it doesn't matter.

BILL

Oh.

MR. BEND

Perhaps you're mad at your father because he wants you to spend less time around books, and more time around people.

BILL

It's because he wants me to be something I'm not!!!

MR. BEND

Oh. I'm sure you misunderstand him. He only wants...

BILL

And he's suspicious of you.

MR. BEND

Oh yes, of course. That's why he never talks to me.

MR. BEND

I don't exist for him.

BILL

True. You don't exist for my father. In fact, I haven't even told him of you. Home-life, and school-life is separate, and that's that.

MR. BEND

Perhaps his frustration is BECAUSE you keep the two separate from each-other.

BILL

Perhaps YOUR frustration also stems from keeping home and work separate.

MR. BEND

You've been doing your homework.

BILL

I lack some instinct with my father, Jack.

MR. BEND

What are you doing?

BILL

Performing a play I wrote.

MR. BEND

That's not part of Portia's Pencil.

BILL

How do you know?

MR. BEND

I know everything about my favorite student.

BILL

And I know everything about Shakespeare!

MR. BEND

What?

MR. BEND

I have found time to memorize all of Shakespeare's works.

BILL

So have I.

MR. BEND

We're an amazing pair.

BILL

The game is afoot.

They smile.

BILL stands up straight, saluting his teacher respectfully, as MR. BEND raises from his seat, addressing his student face-to-face.

MR. BEND

Harry, I do marvel not only at where you spend your time, but with whom you spend your time. If you be my son, where then are you so pointed at?

Pause. BILL is reluctant to answer.

MR. BEND

Shall the son of the King of England prove a thief, and take purses?

BILL shakes his head, which means "NO".

MR. BEND, a natural teacher, gives a lesson...

MR. BEND

There is a thing, Harry, which you have often heard, and is known to many by the name of pitch. This pitch does defile as does the company you keep. I do not speak in drink, but in tears, not in pleasure, but in passion, not in words, but in woes.

Pause.

MR. BEND

Yet, there is a virtuous man I have noted in your company, but I know not his name.

BILL smirks, knowing full well that MR. BEND is talking grandly of none other than himself.

BILL

What manner of man is he, my lord?

MR. BEND

A goodly man: portly, corpulent, of cheerful look, pleasing eye, noble carriage, has some age of fifty and three score. Ah, now I remember his name: Jack Falstaff!

BILL laughs.

MR. BEND

I see virtue in his looks. There is virtue in this Falstaff. Keep with him. Banish the rest.

BILL laughs.

BILL

Jack.

MR. BEND

Yes?

BILL

Jack Falstaff.

MR. BEND

Yes?

BILL

Are you, Jack Falstaff, speaking like a King, my father, would speak?

MR. BEND nods.

MR. BEND

Shall you have me deposed?

BILL

Talk to the hand, 'cuz the face ain't listenin'.

MR. BEND

That's not in the script.

BILL

It's called Neo-Shakespearean; get with it.

MR. BEND

Neo-Shakespearean?

BILL

Yes, it's when you screw around with Shakespeare's stuff, making it your own.

MR. BEND

Is that legal?

BILL stands up, yells in MR. BEND's general direction.

BILL

YOU ARE VIOLENTLY CARRIED AWAY FROM
GRACE!

MR. BEND

You sound like this school's motivational speaker; you know, that horrible guy who yells at people to get them to change their ways.

BILL

Horrible only to you, because he stole your girl.

MR. BEND

Well...

BILL

I'm the son who's pretending to be the king, and you're the son's friend who's pretending to be the son.

MR. BEND

Oh yes. I hate this part.

BILL

Then we'll simply discontinue.

MR. BEND

Does writing help?

BILL

Yes.

MR. BEND

When?

BILL

When, though my friends are plentiful, I feel lost among them, as if they don't exist. As if I don't exist. I don't want to exist, so I escape into characters in stories.

MR. BEND

You've got problems.

BILL

Yes, I know -- but none of them are Anne -- I wish that lying slut could be MY lying slut, my problem.

MR. BEND

What's the point?

BILL

The play's the point!

MR. BEND

The plays the thing.

BILL

When night comes, anger surfaces, fueling my writing.

MR. BEND

Anger towards what?

BILL

Nothing, and everything.

MR. BEND

To thine own self be true.

BILL

Isn't that ... selfish?

MR. BEND

Yes, but positive actions motivated by selfish goals are still positive actions, regardless of the motivation.

BILL

Interesting thought. But will that interesting thought help my performance of PORTIA'S PENCIL to be a success?

MR. BEND

I don't know.

BILL

You're different than all my previous teachers.

MR. BEND

Because I don't know?

BILL

No, because you DO know, and because, unlike all the others, after a few weeks of knowing me, you didn't get an unlisted number!

Uncomfortable pause.

BILL

Now that I think about it: I don't think my other english teachers liked me!

MR. BEND

Do you need a ride home?

BILL

Nope.

MR. BEND

Are you sure?

BILL

Nope. I'd rather ride a skank...like Anne.

MR. BEND

Have you heard of Sir Philip Sydney's sonnet sequence "Astrophel and Stella"?

BILL

Yeah. In the end, they drive over a cliff.

MR. BEND

Have you ever thought of writing sonnets?

BILL

Not really.

MR. BEND

Aren't you pretending to be a modern Shakespeare?

BILL

I am; he GRADUALLY gets into writing sonnets.

MR. BEND

Are you sure?

BILL

Sure as I'll ever be. Before he enjoyed sonnets, he preferred drama -- live stage, creating and exploring characters, the masquerade, battle scenes, sword fights, and flights of fantasy and wit the likes of which you wouldn't believe!!!

MR. BEND

You've got none of those elements in Portia's Pencil.

BILL

That's to be disputed.

MR. BEND

It will be. You're performing it tomorrow afternoon!

MR. BEND exits.

The lights dim -- a spotlight shines on BILL, as he says...

BILL

What lead me to this moment?

Enter a FOOL.

FOOL

How long have you got until this play is to be performed?

BILL

An hour hence.

FOOL

You're missing your morning.

BILL

Help me, fool, for I shake with emotions which I can not begin to comprehend. And the butterflies in my stomach are turning into crispy, crunchy things in my stomach.

FOOL

I prescribe: skip your performance!

BILL

I prescribe: you're a fool!

FOOL

That's my name; don't wear it out!

BILL

I skip too much school, because I'm smarter than the rest of my so-called peers.

FOOL

Attendance will PROVE that you're no fool; otherwise, you're a fooled, fooling fooler.

BILL

HARK! I twitch, burn, and circle with nervousness!

FOOL

Yup.

BILL

What are you? A doctor? What do you prescribe?

FOOL

In order to be confident during your performance, you must dress in the attire of a professional actor.

BILL

What are you? -- a salesman?

FOOL

I am but a simple fool; however, I know of a salesman who can help you, and I think you know who I'm talking about.

BILL lowers his head, in defeat.

BILL

Since I must, I will go.... to...my father. My father the tailor.

INT. LARGE AUDITORIUM, SHADY BROOK HIGH SCHOOL
- DAY

MR. BEND

Let's give a warm, welcoming round of applause to Bill "Shakespeare" Smith!

Everyone applauds as BILL, dressed more stylish than he's ever dressed in his life, calmly approaches the podium.

BILL wears black pants, a long-sleeve black shirt with a turtleneck, deep black sunglasses, and his hair is styled with gel -- he looks amazing.

BILL smiles, looks at the attentive audience.

BILL

Portia was not ready for what was going to happen to her at school that day.

Pause, as he looks over the audience. They're silent, and immediately interested.

BILL

It was a morning like any other.

Pause. He notices some people wriggling in their seats, though everyone seems attentive still.

BILL

When the bell rang, all the students filed into the room, and sat up straight, with their hands folded on the tops of their desks, waiting for orders from the teacher.

Brief pause. He considers the audience. He's amazed at how they all are still attentive.

BILL

This teacher was very strict, and on this day, she told the students, Portia among them...

BILL does an amazingly evil monster voice for the Teacher's dialogue...

BILL

"TAKE OUT A NUMBER THREE PENCIL, AND A SHEET OF RECYCLED PAPER."

The auditorium rumbles with laughter, which visibly boosts BILL's confidence.

BILL

Out of morbid fear, Portia usually did what she was told.

More laughter from the audience, but less than before.

BILL

"NOW!!!" said the teacher.

Lots of laughs because of the evil voice which BILL gives the teacher.

BILL
"PUT YOUR NUMBER THREE PENCILS DOWN"

Amazing laughter response.

BILL
Everyone did exactly as they were told...

Pause.

BILL
Except...

Pause.

BILL
...Portia.

Pause.

BILL
To her own amazement, the number three pencil was...

People laugh as BILL reveals a number three pencil stuck in his sweaty palm.

BILL
...stuck in her sweaty palm!

Then, BILL speaks quickly, with urgency, trying to shake the pencil loose from his palm in a hilarious display of physical comedy.

BILL
She couldn't shake it loose!

He quivers with fright.

BILL
She quivered with fright!

Then, he takes a deep breath, and says the next line very fast in one breath.

BILL
Beads of sweat laced her forehead, and philosophical conundrums raced through her mind for the first time, because she was also actually experiencing her menses for the first time.

People look uneasy.

Purposely looking idiotic, BILL turns to a side, and says...

BILL
That's what it's like, right?

The room roars with laughter.

BILL
My sister's diary can't be wrong, can it?

The room roars with even more laughter than before.

BILL

Waitaminute. I don't have a sister.

Not much laughter.

BILL

Who's diary was that anyway?

Some chuckles.

BILL

ANY-HOE!

Lots of laughter, for some reason.

BILL

The unsuspecting teacher came down the aisle towards Portia: "PORTIA! I TOLD YOU TO PUT DOWN THAT PENCIL!"

There is always laughter when that teacher's evil voice is heard.

BILL

She had never known Portia to be impudent, or impertinent...so she might have...

(aside)

I don't know; I can't remember; I'm not sure. Later, I must set aside a good portion of time to work out the details of this part of the narrative.

Some people applaud.

BILL

But, to continue...

Huge laughter.

BILL

If you're just joining us, the teacher had just ordered that the pencil be put down, but Portia, viewing it in a new, beautiful, creative light, couldn't put it down. "I'm trying," whined Portia, "But once it's up, I can't get it down."

The high school auditorium roars with laughter.

BILL

She was indeed trying to drop the number three phallic symbol...

The place erupts into the loudest laughter ever. BILL is a master of performance.

BILL

...or pull it, or pry it, or somehow throw it away, but something about it's shape...

Pause, as laughter slowly rolls in.

BILL

...and length...

People laugh plenty.

BILL

...was compelling her burgeoning femininity to hold onto it.

Even the teachers in the corner don't seem to mind that this story is almost inappropriate.

BILL has some pre-planned deep thoughts...

BILL

I wonder if there's a word for what she's doing? Or what's happening to her? Nothing pops to mind at the moment. Back to the tale. Nothing would free the pencil from her fingertits...tips...sorry.

Everyone laughs whole-heartedly at the innocent-looking British boy who's telling the story.

BILL

By now, all the other students were laughing, which made the teacher even angrier, and Portia more self-conscious.

Pause.

BILL

Soon the pencil began to write. It dragged Portia's hand with it.

Pause.

BILL

Words flowed from the pencil, onto the paper, an endless stream of scandalous, often insightful words... much like a Canterbury Tale!

Pause. Then meekly, he says...

BILL
Or a Penthouse Letter?

Lots of laughs.

BILL
The teacher continued to order Portia to stop, but she couldn't stop! Soon the paper was completely filled with words shaping themselves into crazy ideas, which were new, and exciting to her playful, young mind; for example, a number between sixty-eight and seventy, but never mind that.

Some chuckles.

BILL
Not one more word could be added. "WELL, YOU'VE RUINED THIS PAPER!" said the teacher. She confiscated the paper, and stored it in her shirt for future reference.

Some laughter.

BILL
"TAKE OUT ANOTHER SHEET OF RECYCLED PAPER, AND WE SHALL ATTEMPT THIS ASSIGNMENT ONCE AGAIN!" The teacher thought that this would put an end to such craziness and shenanigans.

Pause.

BILL

But it didn't.

Laughter. Then, with urgency, BILL continues. Uptight audience members don't laugh at most of the following innuendoes.

BILL

The pencil refused to stop writing! It started writing on the desk. "Don't write on that desk!" bellowed the teacher! When the desk was filled with stories about snakes and motorcycles, the pencil wrote on the windows and the floor and the walls -- all the time dragging Portia with it! The teacher chased frantically after Portia and the runaway pencil. The teacher tried to grab it, or snatch it any way she could. She finally got hold of it, and yanked and pulled and even spanked it, but she couldn't budge it. The pencil just kept on writing; now dragging not only Portia, but the teacher too! And what a drag that was!

Pause for laughter, which there is much of. Then, BILL continues the narrative with increased dramatic intensity.

BILL

Three other students tried to help, but soon they were covered with words, and they were exhausted, resting, preparing for another go at it.

Laughter from the audience.

BILL

Others screamed and ran away, unsure of this bold new endeavor, but the pencil found them and, to their surprised delight, covered them with words. "Stop writing on those children!" screamed the teacher. "What will their parents say?" Then the pencil wrote all over the teacher too!!! That was the last straw. Portia was sent to the principal's office. The pencil wrote all over him too, and the teacher kept screaming, "You can't write on the Principal too! There are laws! Call the police!"

Pause. BILL begins talking slower.

BILL

At this point, the children began to read what was written on Portia's desk; "it's great," they said. "Read this," others hollered. The children became so absorbed in their reading of these forbidden, mysterious texts, that they ignored the screaming Principal and teacher. They couldn't stop reading. As the story grew, so did their interest. They laughed, and cried and commiserated, and matriculated with each other, trying to figure out the various mysteries. They were completely amazed... (aside)

...as was I when I wrote "commiserated" realizing to my great surprise that it is actually part of my vocabulary...but, back to the tale...

He takes a long breath as the audience laugh.

BILL

The teacher and the principal had to be sent away finally to a special school that was very quiet where nothing would upset them.

Laugh track...or genuine laughter from the audience.

BILL

Soon the pencil ran out of lead and came to an abrupt stop.

He pauses for effect.

...remains paused...

The audience laughs.

He continues the monologue.

BILL

Portia was exhausted and let the stub fall from her frazzled, nubile, newly matured fingertits...tips. Sorry.

Huge laughter raises the roof.

BILL

Anyhow, the bell rang for everyone to go home. Portia went home very tired but also very proud of herself for what she had written. When all the other children got to their homes, their parents read the stories that were written all over their clothes. And they laughed and cried and puzzled and played so much that they forgot all about dinner on the stove. They all went to sleep and dreamt that they had...

BILL holds up a pencil.

BILL

...Portia's Pencil.

BILL bows. The audience gives him a standing ovation.

BILL'S THOUGHTS

It seems easy to entertain these people.

BILL smiles conspiratorally.

The lights dim, as we hear the voices of MR. BEND and BILL...

MR. BEND

Did you skip on the day of your competency test?

BILL

No, I passed it with flying colors.

MR. BEND laughs hysterically.

BILL

I failed, but so what? I'll be successful anyway since this education system is flawed.

MR. BEND

Did you read those sonnets?

BILL

They inspired me to write a pile of my own sonnets.

MR. BEND

That's great to hear.

The lights raise, and we see BILL standing, alone.

ANNE, a beautiful girl, enters.

ANNE

I heard your monologue yesterday, Bill.

BILL blushes.

BILL

You...you know my name?

ANNE

Of course I know your name, Bill "Shakespeare" Smith; everyone in the school loved your performance.

BILL

Really?

ANNE

Of course.

Pause.

BILL

So what you're saying is...what exactly?

She kisses him.

It's a long, passionate kiss -- the type of kiss which ends movies.

FADE OUT