

David Henry Wilson

HOW TO AVOID A TRAGEDY

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HOW TO AVOID A TRAGEDY

The characters:

Larry (white male), in his fifties
Oliver (black male), in his forties
Henry (white male), in his thirties
Delia (white female), in her twenties

The set: bare stage, except where specified.

NOTE: Music should be played between the scenes.

Instead of leaving the stage, the actors might change the set and their costumes
in full view of the audience.

How to Avoid a Tragedy won the Hydrae Prize 2003, and was first performed by
Hydrae

Productions at the Tabard Theatre, London, in June 2003 with the following cast:

Henry: alternately Adam Blake & Adrian Peck
Larry: Silas Hawkins
Delia: Rebecca Nancarrow
Oliver: Gabriel Sanguinetti

Director: Adrian Peck
Costume design: Ceres Dandridge
Stage Managers: Zyg Staniaszek & Nick Wharf
Lighting: Eric Young

Scene 1: THE MOOR THE MERRIER

Bare stage. LARRY and HENRY are static, OLIVER is pacing. They are all dressed in Elizabethan costume.

LARRY: It's crazy, Oliver.

OLIVER: She's done nothing wrong!

LARRY: That's beside the point.

OLIVER: It's the whole point!

LARRY: If you don't like the job, you don't sign the contract.

OLIVER: If you don't take the job, you can't change things.

LARRY: Henry, talk some sense into him.

HENRY: You're saying that at some point we go our own way.

OLIVER: Yes.

HENRY: On the premise that great art goes against all expectations, he's right.

LARRY: You're as mad as he is!

HENRY: I know a hawk from a handsaw.

LARRY: And do you know a contract from an application form?

(Enter Delia, also in Elizabethan costume.)

DELIA: Hi, everybody!

(General greeting.)

You're looking very conspiratorial.

(She kisses Oliver and Larry formally, and Henry less formally.

There is an awkward silence.)

Did I say something?

LARRY: Oliver doesn't want to kill you.

DELIA: Oh! That's very sweet, Oliver.

LARRY: He's serious,

OLIVER: I want us to live happily ever after.

DELIA: How, Oliver?

OLIVER: I haven't worked it out yet.

HENRY: I can see it. I know how it can be done. You could be onto something really big

here, Oliver. They sit down and wait for the usual story, and then – wham!

We

hit them with something totally different. It could be a new art form.

(Oliver shrugs modestly.)

DELIA: So what happens?

HENRY: I'll show you. Put your wig on, Larry.

(Larry, shaking his head, puts on a wig, which makes him look younger.)

LARRY: I do this under protest,

HENRY: We have noted it well.

OLIVER: There is a problem, Henry. I know what I don't want to do, but I don't know how

not to do it.

HENRY: Lay thy finger thus, and let thy soul be instructed. *(To Larry:)* Look to your

wife.

LARRY: Look to your wife; observe her well with Cassio.
 Wear your eye thus, not jealous nor secure.
 I would not have your free and noble nature
 Out of self-bounty be abus'd; look to't.
 I know our country disposition well:
 In Venice they do let heaven see the pranks
 They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience
 Is not to leave't undone, but keep't unknown.

HENRY: Et cetera, et cetera.
(He motions Larry to withdraw, and Delia to enter.)

OLIVER: Look where she comes.
 If she be false, O! then heaven mocks itself.
 I'll not believe it.

HENRY: There's the vital moment! You've heard the story. Now you're face to face.
 You have the choice. Do you now dissemble, or do you tell her what Iago
 said?

OLIVER: I tell her.
(Henry nods.)
 How now, Desdemona,
 Iago has been speaking of strange matters.

DELIA: What sort of matters?

OLIVER: That thou art a whore,
 And sleeping in the arms of my friend Cassio.

DELIA: Me? A whore? With Cassio? Did he say Cassio?

OLIVER: Ay, Cassio. Of course, I don't believe it,
 But let me hear thee say it is not true.

DELIA: It is not true.

OLIVER: I'm glad to hear thee say it.

DELIA: I'll say it once again. It is not true.

OLIVER: And once again I'm glad to hear thee say it.

DELIA: Then shall I say it again?

HENRY: This could go on all night. You must have proof!

OLIVER: I must have proof! But how can there be proof
 Of something that has never taken place?
 Perhaps I need once more to see Iago.
(Henry gestures frantically towards himself.)
 Or better still, to speak with Cassio.
 Cassio!

HENRY: I thought you'd never ask.
 I'm here, my Lord. Forgive my drunkenness.
 Grovel, grovel. What's your Lordship's pleasure?
(Oliver looks puzzled.)
 Your Lordship called me. Wilt thou ask a question?

OLIVER: *(cottoning on)* Iago says that thou and Desdemona
 Are having an affair. She says you're not.

What sayest thou?
 HENRY: No such luck, my Lord.
 Your wife is truer than the truest truth.
 OLIVER: If she is truer than the truest truth,
 Iago's falser than the falsest falsies.
 HENRY: Send for him, sir, and we'll expose his falsies.
 OLIVER: Iago!
 (*Larry 'enters'.*)
 LARRY: General? Did I hear you call?
 (*He 'sees' Henry and Delia. Double take.*)
 Oh! Your Ladyship. And Lieutenant Cassio.
 HENRY: Ex-Lieutenant.
 LARRY: Is there something wrong?
 HENRY: You told the general that his wife and I
 Were having an affair.
 LARRY: I...may have done.
 HENRY: Then tell me, when did this affair begin?
 LARRY: Begin?
 HENRY: What needs this iterance, man? Begin.
 LARRY: Well, lovers meet whenever meet they can.
 HENRY: When, Iago? Was it on the sea?
 We followed brave Othello here to Cyprus,
 Me on one ship, you and Desdemona
 Upon another. When we came to Cyprus,
 Just yesterday, we drank till I was drunk,
 Disgraced myself, and rightly was cashiered.
 And now today it's said that we are lovers,
 So where, Iago, could I sleep with her?
 Upon the stormy seas, or in her bed
 Last night, while she lay in her husband's arms?
 Where, Iago? When?
 OLIVER: Answer, Iago.
 LARRY: (*shuffling*) It's possible I've made a slight mistake.
 OLIVER: Cassio, take this viper to the dungeons,
 And have him flogged a hundred thousand times.
 HENRY: With pleasure, sir.
 OLIVER: And Cassio.
 HENRY: My lord?
 OLIVER: Now art thou my lieutenant once again.
 HENRY: Thank you, my lord.
 OLIVER: So there's a happy ending!
 DELIA: Not quite.
 OLIVER: Not quite?
 DELIA: Aren't you forgetting something?
 Two little words, perhaps?
 OLIVER: Two words? Two words?

Goodbye, Iago? Hello, Desdemona?
 DELIA: You just accused your wife of being a whore,
 And needed Cassio here to prove I wasn't.
 OLIVER: It's true. You're right, of course. Two words. Thanks, Cassio.
 HENRY: Perhaps your wife means you should speak to her.
 OLIVER:(*To Delia:*) The problem's solved. We've proved Iago guilty.
 Two words? Well done? Two words. Well...sod Iago.
 DELIA: (*breaking the act*) You're hopeless, Oliver!
 HENRY: (*To Oliver:*) Go on, say you're sorry!
 OLIVER:(*kneeling*) Pray you now, forget and forgive. I am old and foolish.
 DELIA: That's more like it.
 HENRY: So now we have our happy ending.
 LARRY: Do we?
 HENRY: What?
 LARRY: If you can twist things, so can I. I demand the right to defend myself.
 OLIVER: On what grounds?
 LARRY: That uttering a rumour is no crime. I'll prove my innocence with an action
 replay.
 I am to pray you not to strain my speech
 To grosser issues nor to larger reach
 Than to suspicion.
 OLIVER: I will not.
 LARRY: Should you do so, my lord,
 My speech should fall into such vile success
 As my thoughts aim not at. Cassio's my worthy friend.
 Were these my words, or weren't they?
 OLIVER: Yes, they were.
 LARRY: My lord, I would I might entreat your honour
 To scan this thing no further. Were these my words,
 Or weren't they?
 OLIVER: Yes, they were.
 LARRY: In the meantime,
 Let me be thought too busy in my fears,
 As worthy cause I have to fear I am,
 And hold her free, I do beseech your honour.
 Were these my words, or weren't they?
 OLIVER: Yes, they were.
 LARRY: I rest my case.
 OLIVER: But we know that you're a villain!
 LARRY: To vouch this is no proof. Can you destroy my defence?
 OLIVER: No.
 HENRY: You can't unsay what you said to Rodrigo.
 LARRY: If we're all authors now, we can say and unsay what we please. You can't have
 one rule for the goodies and one for the baddies. Up until the point where
 you've changed the script, my only crime is cheating Rodrigo, and none of you

know about that. I can't be punished for mere prattle without practice. Now listen:

Forgive me, Othello, Forgive me, Desdemona.
I told you what I thought, and told no more,
But I was wrong. Thank heaven, I was wrong!
No harm is done, save to my reputation,
And losing that is punishment enough,
For I have lost the immortal part of myself
And what remains is bestial. Woe is me!

HENRY: Bloody hypocrite!

LARRY: Prove it!

OLIVER: So what is our ending?

HENRY: I must say that democracy has its problems. Clearly Othello and Desdemona
live
happily ever after.

LARRY: And Iago?

OLIVER: Must be thrown into the dungeon.

LARRY: I refuse.

HENRY: You're a subversive, Larry,

LARRY: It wasn't my idea to rewrite the play. But since you insist on your rights, I
Insist on mine.

OLIVER: Well I say to hell with Iago, so long as we two are happy.

HENRY: Amen to that.

LARRY: And I will plot your downfall. Or I'll make a deal with you.

OLIVER: A deal?

HENRY: What sort of deal?

LARRY: Let King Lear live, and I'll let Iago die.

HENRY: If it be man's work, I will do it. Delia?

DELIA: What about Cordelia?

LARRY: Oh, she must live as well – and happily ever after.

DELIA: Suits me.

HENRY: Oliver?

OLIVER: Fine with me.

HENRY: What will hap more tonight, safe 'scape the king! Come friends, let us prepare.
(*They all go off.*)

Scene 2: ENTENTE CORDELIA

(*Larry alone, enthroned and dressed as Lear.*)

LARRY: Come, my daughters.

Since now we will divest us both of rule,
Interest of territory, cares of state,
Which of you shall we say doth love us most?
That we our largest bounty may extend
Where nature doth with merit challenge. Goneril,
Our eldest-born, speak first.

(Henry and Oliver enter, dressed as Goneril and Regan and carrying scripts. Delia follows, as Cordelia.)

Why dost thou bear a script? Know'st not thy lines?

HENRY: It is a part I've never played before.

OLIVER: And hope shall never have to play again.

LARRY: Goneril, our eldest-born, speak first.

HENRY:*(Reading:)* Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter,
Dearer than eyesight, space and liberty,
Beyond what can be valu'd rich or rare,
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour.
As much as child e'er lov'd or father found,
A love that makes breath poor and speech unable,
Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

DELIA: What shall Cordelia do?

LARRY: Nothing, my dear. What says our second daughter,
Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall? Speak.

OLIVER: You've left a bit out.

LARRY: I'm not giving away the prizes till I've heard all the competitors.

HENRY: That's fair.

OLIVER:*(reading, rather badly:)* I am made of that self metal as my sister,
And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
I find she names my very deed of love.
Only she comes too short: that I profess
Myself an enemy to all other joys
Which the most precious square of sense possesses
And find I am alone felicitate
In your dear highness' love.

HENRY: Ye-e-es, we'll let you know.

DELIA: Then poor Cordelia!
And yet not so, since I am sure my love's
More ponderous than my tongue.

LARRY: And now our joy,
Although our last, not least; to whose young love
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy
Strive to be interest'd, what can you say to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

DELIA: Nothing, my lord.

LARRY: Nothing?

DELIA: Nothing.

LARRY: Nothing. Nada?

DELIA: Nada.

LARRY: Niente?

DELIA: Niente.

LARRY: Nichts? Rien? Rien de rien?

DELIA: Absolutely nothing.

LARRY: And quite right too. Well done, Cordelia,

Love comes from the heart, not from the tongue.
Thy sisters are a pair of hypocrites,
Seeking to pull the wool o'er Daddy's eyes.
I may be old, but stupid I am not,
And I have seen precisely what you're up to.
You are not what you seem.

HENRY: You're right there, father,

LARRY: Don't interrupt. Now hear me, England, hear me.
Goneril, Regan, flatterers that you are,
Flatter your husbands in your little dukedoms,
And make no fuss. Cordelia shall be Queen.
Do not look black upon me, Goneril.

HENRY: He's Regan.

LARRY: My mind's made up. Cordelia and I
Shall live together. She'll do all the work,
Govern the state, care for the land and me,
And I shall revel in pure self-indulgence.
End of story. Curtain. Three hours saved.

DELIA: One moment, father. Aren't you forgetting something?

LARRY: Must I say sorry, too? Well, what's forgotten?

DELIA: The vines of France and milk of Burgundy.
I'm to be married.

LARRY: Ah! Well then, get married.

DELIA: That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty.

LARRY: Well, that's all right, so long as the half that's mine
Looks after me and does whate'er I want.

DELIA: But if I marry France or Burgundy,
They'll want to live in France or Burgundy.

LARRY: Ah!

DELIA: Are you sure you'll cope with French cuisine,
And playing boules instead of playing cricket?

HENRY: Then there's the language.

OLIVER: And the lavatories.

LARRY: In that case, they can only marry you
If they agree to come and live in England.
Who wants to live in Europe anyway?

DELIA (to Henry:) Get changed.

(Henry rushes off stage.)

My lord, I have a better plan.
Here in the court there is a handsome youth
Of noble birth and nobler disposition,
Who would, I'm sure, be just the man for me.

LARRY: Who is this man?

DELIA: The Earl of Gloucester's son.
Edgar, come forth.

(Henry comes half on, as he is only half dressed. He is still wearing his Goneril wig.)

HENRY: Hold on!

LARRY: My godson Edgar!
A great idea, first mooted by Nahum Tate
In a version that supplanted William Shakespeare's
For something like a century and a half.
Come on, come on! Flannel, rhubarb, flannel.

HENRY: *(as he finishes dressing)* Your Majesty.

LARRY: What an untidy boy.

(Delia points to Henry's wig, and he removes it.)

HENRY: Long in your court I've made my amorous sojourn,
And now beg leave to marry your youngest daughter.

LARRY: Then wilt thou promise not to live abroad?

HENRY: I will.

LARRY: And I can come and live with you?

HENRY: You can.

LARRY: I'll have a bathroom of my own?

HENRY: You shall.

LARRY: My own TV, with satellite?

HENRY: Whate'er you want.

LARRY: Then yes. Iago's dead.

And we shall all live happily ever after.

HENRY: I see thou art enjoying this new sport.

LARRY: I must admit, it has its compensations.

HENRY: As Edgar, I approve this happy ending.

(He dons his Goneril wig.)

As Goneril I must register a protest.

(He gives Oliver a dig.)

OLIVER: And so must I.

LARRY: Upon what grounds?

OLIVER: *(to Henry:)* What grounds?

HENRY: We are girls more sinn'd against than sinning.
Had we not flattered you, Your Majesty,
As you desired, obedience we'd have scanted,
And would be worth the want that we have wanted.

OLIVER: I didn't quite follow that – the want that we have wanted? Did we want a want? Surely it's a want we didn't want.

HENRY: Pray you, let us hit together. He who wants to be flattered should not complain when he is flattered, let alone cut off his daughters with a mere dukedom.

OLIVER: I agree.

LARRY: Too bad.

HENRY: What?

LARRY: I'm King, so I make the rules.

HENRY: Corruption in the place!

DELIA: Hold on, aren't I supposed to be Queen now?

LARRY: Yes.

DELIA: So Edgar should be King.

ALL: Ah!

(Each "Ah!" is in a different tone, according to circumstances.)

DELIA: In which case, father, I suggest you leave Edgar to deal with Goneril.

ALL: Ah!

LARRY: A Daniel come to judgment! Yea, a Daniel!

DELIA: *(to Henry:)* Dear lord and master, say what's to be done.

HENRY: Cordelia, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

DELIA: O! throw away the worser part of it.

LARRY: Proceed to judgment!

HENRY: *(removing his Goneril wig)* Why then, thus it is:

You must all prepare...to live happily ever after.

(Larry and Delia cheer, and they all go out. Henry stops at the exit.)

(to the audience:) All, that is, except Goneril and Regan.

(He goes out.)

Scene 3: HAMLET AND MACBETH, ALL HALE

(Stage bare, except for a screen. Larry, Oliver and Delia come to centre stage, with Henry standing on one side.)

LARRY: Ophelia, walk you here. Gracious, so please you,
We will bestow ourselves. *(To Delia:)* Read on this book,
That show of such an exercise may colour
Your loneliness. We are oft to blame in this,
'Tis too much prov'd, that with devotion's visage
And pious action we do sugar o'er
The devil himself.

OLIVER *(aside:)* O! 'Tis too true.
How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!
The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted word.
O heavy burden!

HENRY: And that's the crucial moment!

DELIA: What do you mean?

HENRY: Claudius wants a happy ending! Proceed.

LARRY: I hear him bossing us; let's withdraw, my lord.

(Larry and Oliver hide behind the screen.)

HENRY: Soliloquy – to cut, or not to cut...

ALL: Cut!

(Henry holds up his hand in acknowledgement.)

HENRY: Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember'd.

DELIA: Good my lord,
How does your honour for this many a day?

HENRY: I humbly thank you; well, well, well.

DELIA: My lord, I have remembrances of yours
That I have longed long to redeliver.
I pray you now, receive them.

HENRY: No, not I.
I never gave you aught.

DELIA: My honour'd lord, you know right well you did,
And with them words of so sweet breath compos'd
As made the things more rich: their perfume lost,
Take these again; for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.

HENRY: And you are right. O what a fool I've been,
Moping around when I've got you to love.
Forgive me, dear Ophelia, forgive me.
Let this, and this, the greatest discords be...
(*He is kissing her.*)
That e'er our hearts shall make.

OLIVER: Hey! That's my line!

HENRY: Ha! Methinks I hear mine uncle's voice.
(*Striding to the screen*) And there he is! The King's a peeping Tom!
Confess!

OLIVER: O Hamlet, what thou say'st is true,
And I have done much worse a crime than peeping.
I killed thy father, and I took his crown,
And took his life, his wife, his teddy bear.
But conscience now is what has taken me.
My mind's made up. Hamlet, the throne is thine,
And with this sword I'll end my misery.
(*He stabs himself.*)

HENRY: Well done!

OLIVER: No, wait! I haven't finished yet.
Death, O death, how welcome is thy sting.
Forgive me, Hamlet. Marry Ophelia,
Rule wisely over Denmark, and remember
A wicked uncle who repented much,
And...

HENRY: ...died a rapid death.

OLIVER: If you insist.
(*He 'dies'.*)

LARRY: So Hamlet marries Ophelia, they become King and Queen of Denmark, and
live happily ever after. But what happens to poor Gertrude?

HENRY: Ah!

OLIVER: I know!

HENRY: Lie down. You're supposed to be dead.

OLIVER: Let me be Gertrude.

HENRY: I thought you were sick of drag.

DELIA: Let him do it, Henry, if he wants to.

HENRY: Right. Give him his Regan wig!
(Someone - preferably a stagehand - brings Oliver the wig, which he puts on under the kingly, now queenly crown. He gazes down at the spot where he had 'died'.)

OLIVER: My husband dead. Slain by his own dark hand.
 And so once more the widow's weeds are mine.
 What shall become of me?

HENRY: Well, you tell us.
(Oliver gazes at Henry, then at Delia, and finally – very meaningfully – at Larry.)

LARRY: Oh no!

OLIVER: Oh yes. Polonius, my love...
(He closes in.)
 I've always had a penchant for old men.

DELIA: *(to Henry:)* Your mother is a nymphomaniac.

HENRY: I think the word's a necrophiliac.

LARRY: I'm not that old.

OLIVER: Oh, my dearest Polly...

LARRY: Give over.

HENRY: Well, it's not a bad idea.

LARRY: No. I refuse.

HENRY: You can't refuse a queen.

OLIVER: Who are you calling a queen? Oh, yes, I see.
 Polly, my darling, wilt thou marry me
 And prove the ancient adage: third time lucky?
(Larry doesn't know what to say. Henry and Delia giggle.)

HENRY: Say something, Larry!

LARRY: Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!

OLIVER: Don't try to change the subject.

HENRY: I'd have thought Polonius would be quite keen on the idea of marrying himself into the royal family.

LARRY: I don't think Mrs Polonius would approve.

HENRY: I thought she was dead.

LARRY: Everyone assumes she's dead, but there's no evidence in the text. Laertes talks of his true mother, but no-one else ever mentions her. I reckon she's just tucked up at home waiting to get a word in edgeways.

OLIVER: Oh, woe is me.

LARRY: Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!

HENRY: Agreed. Oliver, as consolation, you shall be Macbeth.

LARRY: Textual justification for such miscasting?

HENRY: Act Four Scene Three: "Black Macbeth will seem as pure as snow." Oliver, give Larry the crown.
(Oliver hands the crown to Larry.)
(To Larry:) Gracious, so please you, we will bestow ourselves.
(To Oliver:) You have no spur.

OLIVER: I have no spur

To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on the other.

(Delia "enters".)

How now! What news?

DELIA: He has almost supp'd. Why have you left the chamber?

OLIVER: Hath he asked for me?

DELIA: Know you not he has?

OLIVER: We will proceed no further in this business.

He hath honour'd me of late, and I have bought
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
Not cast aside so soon.

(Henry pushes Larry on.)

LARRY: O worthiest cousin!

The sin of my ingratitude even now
Was heavy on me. Thou and thy dear Lady
Have filled this day with measureless content.
More is thy due than more than all can pay,
And all your humble debtor now can say
Is...Aaaargh!

OLIVER: Is what?

LARRY: Is aaargh! Ooooh! Aaaargh! Ooooh! Aaaargh!

(He is clutching his chest, and staggering all over the stage.)

OLIVER: My Lord!

DELIA: Your Majesty! Why do you clutch your bosom?

LARRY: Help, help!

DELIA: What kind of help?

OLIVER: He needs a doctor.

(Larry subsides to the floor.)

LARRY: Too late, too late. They always come too late.
Send for young Malcolm, Prince of Cumberland.
Make haste. The strings of life begin to crack.

OLIVER: Malcolm! Malcolm!

(Henry "enters".)

HENRY: Cousin, I am here.

LARRY: Malcolm, my son! Aaaah ooooh!

HENRY: What ails thee, father?

Hast thou o'ercreaten? Or indeed o'eracted?

LARRY: I pant for life.

HENRY: Behold my father's pants.

DELIA: Where?

LARRY: When I made thee Prince of Cumberland,
I little dream'd that I should die so soon.
Thou art too young now to be King of Scotland.
I should have died hereafter;

There would have been a time for such a word...

HENRY: O father, thou art right. I am too young.
O do not die. Live on for twenty years,
And then perchance I'll be mature enough.

LARRY: I cannot live.

HENRY: And I cannot be king!
What shall we do? This situation's hopeless!

LARRY: There must be a solution. Ah! Perhaps...
Macbeth!

OLIVER: Your Majesty?

LARRY: Would you be king?

OLIVER: What me, Your Majesty?

HENRY: A great idea!

OLIVER: Oh well...

HENRY: Refuse.

OLIVER: No, no, I really couldn't.

HENRY: Cousin, we beg of you!

OLIVER: Me? King of Scotland?
King of Scotland? Me? (*To Henry:*) Should I still refuse?

HENRY: A few more noes.

OLIVER: No. No, no. No, no!

LARRY: If thou dost love thy king, and love thy country,
Then heed my dying wish, and say thou'lt do it.

DELIA: Do, good my lord; your wife and king entreat you.

HENRY: O! make us joyful: grant our lawful suit!

OLIVER: Will you enforce me to a world of cares?

LARRY: Macbeth, I die!

OLIVER: I am not made of stone,
But penetrable to your kind entreats,
Albeit against my conscience and my soul.

HENRY: Long live Macbeth, our worthy King of Scotland!
(*The three others cheer Oliver.*)

LARRY: I die...aaargh aaargh...I die a happy man.
(*He "dies".*)

DELIA: It's not much of a play, is it?

HENRY: It's a happy ending.

DELIA: Halfway through Act One Scene Seven.

HENRY: It's a definite improvement on the original. Nobody wants tragedy these days,
right, Oliver?

OLIVER: Right on, man!

LARRY: No more, the text is foolish.

DELIA: Foul and foolish.

OLIVER: Fair is foul.

HENRY: And foul is fair.

LARRY: You'll get the sack.

HENRY & LARRY: But we don't care.

HENRY: *(to audience:)* So, on your patience evermore attending,
New joy wait on you! Here our play hath ending.
But if our words and actions caused offence,
We beg to plead the case for the defence:
By changing these existing tragic courses,
We do but what the Bard did with his sources.
(They all go off.)

The End