

"THE REAL PROBLEM"
by Bruce Kane

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WARNING No one shall make any changes to this play for the purpose of production. Publication of this plays does not imply its availability for production.

SETTING: The Cauldron – An Elizabethan era pub

CHARACTERS:

Desdemona: Blonde, beautiful, sweet, trusting, married to Othello

Juliet: Young, pretty, impatient – dating Romeo

Katherine: Brunette, voluptuous, ill tempered – engaged to Petruchio

Anne Boleyn: Late wife of Henry VIII. Actually just the head of Anne Boleyn.

Hecate: Waitress at The Cauldron. One of the witches from MacBeth

(Lights up on Juliet pacing impatiently while Desdemona sits at a table on which sits the head of Anne Boleyn.)

The Real Problem

JULIET: (*quite Shakespearean*) Romeo... Romeo... Wherefore art thou Romeo?

ANNE: (*annoyed*) Is she gonna do that all day?

DES: Leave her alone... She's in love.

ANNE: Love... Give me a break. (*to Juliet*) How long have you and this..?

JULIET: Romeo...

ANNE: Romeo... been getting it on?

JULIET: We're not getting it on.

ANNE: Then what's the point?

DES: They just met. A relationship takes time to grow... to mature.

JULIET: The real problem is...

ANNE: I knew it... Now we're getting down to the nitty gritty. What's her name?

JULIET: What's whose name?

ANNE: The real problem. What's her name?

JULIET: There's nobody else.

ANNE: There's always somebody else. Until my recent surgical procedure the real problem was usually me. I'm happy to say.

JULIET: The real problem is that he's a Montague.

ANNE: Oh, crap.

JULIET: Exactly.

DES: So, he's a Montague?

JULIET: Our families hate each other.

DES: Tell me about it.

JULIET: Your families don't get along, either?

DES: His side is fine... It's mine... You know... The whole racial thing.

JULIET: It's terrible. We're always having to sneak around so no one will see us.

ANNE: I know... Isn't that hot?

DES: Oh please... Look what sneaking around got you. *(to Juliet)*
Relax... He'll be here.

ANNE: Yeah, when he wants something.

(The front door slams open with a bang. Katherine storms in.)

KATHERINE: I..! Hate..! Men..!

ANNE: Look who's here. The Duchess of "Shrews-bury".

KATHERINE: Men..! Are..! Pigs..!!!

DES: Oh, you don't mean that, Katherine.

KATHERINE: All..! Men..! Are..! Pigs!!!

ANNE: Alright... What did Petruchio do this time?

KATHERINE: He's a man. Isn't that enough?

DES: You say that about every guy you date.

KATHERINE: That's because every guy I date... is a pig!!!

DES: What about Lorenzo? You two were pretty hot and heavy there for a while.

KATHERINE: Until he turned into a... Pig. A whiny, sniveling, momma's boy... Pig!

DES: Antonio wasn't a momma's boy.

KATHERINE: No Antonio was a preening, self absorbed, narcissistic... Pig!

The Real Problem

DES: Okay. Marcello wasn't sniveling, he wasn't self absorbed and he certainly wasn't a momma's boy.

KATHERINE: No, he wasn't any of those things. But he was married... The Pig!!!

ANNE: I didn't know that.

KATHERINE: Neither did I.

ANNE: Face it, Katie. The only reason you fight with all these guys is for the make-up sex afterwards. Not that I blame you.

(Hecate enters carrying a flagon which she places on the table holding Anne's head.)

ANNE: *(to Hecate)* Excuse me.

HECATE: Yes?

ANNE: A straw would be nice.

HECATE: I'll be right back. A flagon of sow's blood, Miss Katherine?

KATHERINE: A double espresso.

HECATE: Coming up.

DES: Maybe you should consider cutting back on the caffeine, Katherine

JULIET: If he doesn't show up soon, I swear I'll never talk to him again.

KATHERINE: What's her problem?

DES: Her young man didn't show up.

KATHERINE: *(to Juliet)* Count your blessings.

ANNE: That's what I tried to tell her.

KATHERINE: *(to Anne)* A girl after my own heart. High five. *(realizes)* Oh... Sorry.

JULIET: What am I going to do?

KATHERINE: For one thing, you're gonna stop mooning around over this... what'shisname?

JULIET: Romeo.

KATHERINE: (*mockingly*) Romeo? You're kidding.

JULIET: What's in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

KATHERINE: Who told you that?

JULIET: He did.

ANNE: Before or after he put his hand down your dress?

DES: Behave yourself.

KATHERINE: You want this Romeo of yours to take you seriously?

JULIET: Yes... With all my heart.

KATHERINE: Then, tell him to take a hike.

JULIET: Excuse me.

KATHERINE: Tell him to get lost... Tell him to take long walk off a short pier.

JULIET: That doesn't make any sense.

DES: Don't listen to her.

ANNE: Listen to her.

KATHERINE: Men only want one thing. And as soon as they get it, they want it from someone else.

ANNE: Amen, sister.

KATHERINE: As an example of what I'm talking about.... Take Petruchio... Please.

DES: How can you talk like that about the man you're going to marry?

KATHERINE: Who said I was going to marry him?

The Real Problem

DES: But your father has announced the date of your forthcoming marriage.

KATHERINE: My father just wants me out of the house. I could be marrying a goat for all he cares.

DES: But once a marriage has been announced...

KATHERINE: My father said I was going to marry Petruchio. I didn't say I was going to marry him.

JULIET: I'm confused.

KATHERINE: Don't be, that's the man's job. It's your job to keep him that way.

ANNE: Where were you when I was tall?

KATHERINE: Remember, it's not the destination that counts. It's the journey. Men love journeys. All you have to do is keep moving the goalposts.

DES: Nonsense. Othello and I are perfectly happy.

KATHERINE: (*doubtful*) Really?

DES: Really.

ANNE: What have you heard?

DES: (*defensively*) She hasn't heard anything because there's nothing to hear.

ANNE: What have you heard?

KATHERINE: Well... I don't want to gossip.

ANNE: Gossip is only when it's behind someone's back. She's sitting right here. So spill.

KATHERINE: Petruchio told me that Iago told him that that's there's trouble in paradise.

DES: (*defensively*) Iago doesn't know what he's talking about. There is no such thing.

KATHERINE: If you say so.

ANNE: What's she talking about?

DES: Nothing.

ANNE: Really? Nothing? Oh come on Des... It's only us girls.

DES: Well, Othello has been acting a little strange lately.

ANNE: Like how strange? What strange?

DES: He keeps questioning me all the time.

JULIET: About what? What kind of questions?

DES: About little things. Dumb things.

ANNE: Does he think you're fooling around?

DES: No, of course not.

KATHERINE: Are you fooling around?

DES: No. How could you even think such a thing?

ANNE: If you're not, you should be.

DES: (*to Juliet*) Don't listen to her. She's just bitter.

ANNE: Only you could have the worst of two worlds. A husband that thinks you're having an affair without the fun of actually having one.

DES: Could we please change the subject.

KATHERINE: This is exactly what I'm talking about.

DES: Don't you tell this impressionable child she should be having promiscuous relationships.

KATHERINE: I'm telling her just the opposite. If Othello was still pursuing you, he wouldn't be accusing you of sleeping with other men, he'd be competing with them.

JULIET: (*impatiently*) Oh where is he?

KATHERINE: Forget him.

JULIET: But, I can't.

KATHERINE: Listen to me. He's not the only fish in the sea. Look at you. You're young... You're pretty... You've got to let him know that as far as you're concerned... it's raining men.

JULIET: But won't he lose interest?

KATHERINE: Au contraire, my dear. Au contraire. That's when he'll become really interested. Really, really interested. It's called competition. It's called let's see whose is bigger.

DES: Starting a relationship on false pretenses can only end in disaster.

KATHERINE: False... True... They're all pretenses and they all end in disaster. When the ship goes down, you just have to make sure you're the one in the life boat.

DES: I could never live that way.

KATHERINE: Well, Petruchio would never accuse me of having an affair.

ANNE: Why not?

KATHERINE: Because he's too busy trying to get me into bed.

ANNIE: You mean you and Petruchio aren't...?

KATHERINE: That's right.

ANNIE: Then what do you do...?

KATHERINE: I said Petruchio and I aren't. I didn't say I wasn't.

DES: I'm shocked.

ANNE: You go girl.

DES: Juliet, don't listen to these two.

JULIET: Maybe they're right. Maybe I should see other boys. That'd show Romeo.

DES: Real relationships are built on trust. Do you want to end up like her? (*points at Anne*)

ANNE: Hey... Don't forget. I was once queen of England.

DES: And what are you now?

ANNE: But when I lived, I really lived. Not like you. Prim and proper and tasting of life in delicate little forkfuls. (*to Juliet*) You listen to Katherine. No man will ever rule her.

KATHERINE: You bet your ass.

ANNE: I would if I had one.

KATHERINE: Everyone calls me a shrew and worse. Well, if I'm such a damn shrew why is Petruchio still hanging around? Come on Desdemona, you're the expert on love and marriage. Why didn't Petruchio take off long ago, if I'm such a shrew?

DES: Maybe he sees beyond your exterior. Maybe he sees the real you.

KATHERINE: First of all I've got a great exterior. And second of all, he hasn't gotten beyond first of all.

DES: You can't really believe that.

KATHERINE: As soon as he gets his hands on this exterior he's gonna be looking around to get his hands on every other exterior... and posterior he can.

DES: If you have such a low opinion of Petruchio why do you care if he stays around or doesn't stay around?

KATHERINE: That's my business.

DES: (*a slow realization*) You love him.

KATHERINE: (*turns away*) Don't be ridiculous.

DES: You love him. Kate loves Petruchio.

JULIET: Do you love him?

KATHERINE: It's unimportant.

The Real Problem

DES: How can you say that love is unimportant?

KATHERINE: Love is a weakness. Especially in a woman. It makes you vulnerable. And I will never be vulnerable... again.

DES: But, you'll also never know true happiness.

KATHERINE: If it means that I'll never have to walk in any man's shadow, it's a trade off I'll gladly make.

JULIET: I don't think I could do that.

KATHERINE: Wait till you come home some day and find lipstick on Romeo's tunic and it's not yours.

JULIET: Romeo wouldn't do that.

KATHERINE: He's a man, isn't he?

ANNE: That's why I never waited around for any man to cheat on me. If lipstick was going to show up on any tunics, I made sure it was mine.

DES: And it usually was.

(Hecate enters. She hands a note to Juliet)

HECATE: This came for you. *(Hecate drops a straw in Anne's flagon and exits)*

JULIET: It's from him.

DES: What does it say?

JULIET: It says my bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep; the more I give to thee,
The more I have, for both are infinite.

(Katherine sticks her finger down her throat in a gagging motion)

JULIET: *(dreamily)* Isn't he wonderful?

(Anne mocks Juliet by mouthing "Isn't he wonderful?" behind her back.)

JULIET: He wants to see me.

KATHERINE: If he wants to see you, then let him make the trip.

ANNE: And make sure it's long and arduous

DES: You go see him.

KATHERINE: You're making a big mistake.

DES: No, you're not.

ANNE: If I were you I wouldn't put all my eggs in Romeo's basket.

DES: If you were her you'd still have eggs to put in a basket.

(Juliet wrestles with whether to go or stay... Finally)

JULIET: Oh, Des... I have to go.

DES: Then go.

JULIET: Thank you. Parting is such sweet sorrow, that I shall goodbye til it be morrow. *(runs off)*

ANNE: Yeah... Whatever.

DES: Good luck. You two should be ashamed of yourselves.

ANNE: It's a tough world out there. The child's gotta be prepared.

DES: She's in love.

KATHERINE: What's love got to do with it?

DES: Well, thank you Tina Turner. Don't either of you remember the first time you fell in love? How startlingly it was. How utterly wonderful.

KATHERINE: How old are you?

DES: Well, I still feel that way about Othello. Just like the first day I laid eyes on him. And you feel that way about Petruchio... I can tell.

KATHERINE: You're a very sick woman.

DES: And what about the first time you met Henry. What did you see?

ANNE: A large stomach and all the wealth of England.

DES: I don't believe it. You must have loved him a little bit.

The Real Problem

ANNE: I wish I thought as highly of me as you do.

DES: Then I feel sorry for you.

ANNE: Don't. I never did anything I didn't want to do. Anything.

(Hecate returns with a double espresso for Katherine)

DES: Hecate...

HECATE: Yes, Miss Desdemona.

DES: Have you ever been in love?

HECATE: There was a warlock I had my good eye on once. Everyone said it was a match made in hell. Sexiest man I ever met. Big ears, horns, fangs... Skin like rotting flesh... Man, he was hot.

KATHERINE: Didn't work out?

HECATE: Caught him with some crone.

KATHERINE: I rest my case.

DES: Did he break your heart?

HECATE: If I had one, he would have broken it. But, I still turned him into a toad.

KATHERINE: Really? A toad? You gotta teach me how to do that.

DES: Look at the time... I have to get going.

KATHERINE: Yeah... Me, too.

DES: *(to Anne)* Can we drop you anywhere?

ANNE: It's almost happy hour. I'm sure I can find someone to take me home.

DES: Anne, I despair for you.

ANNE: You sure you don't want to stay around for another flagon of sow's blood?

DES: No, I gotta go. I told Othello that I'd make his favorite dish for him.

KATHERINE: What a coincidence. I promised Petruchio I'd throw his favorite dish at him.

(Katherine and Desdemona exit.)

HECATE: *(shaking her head)* Tsk... Tsk... Tsk.

ANNE: What's wrong?

HECATE: Oh, nothing.

ANNE: Something's wrong... I know you Hecate. It's my friends, isn't it? *(Hecate sighs)* You've seen something. Something in their futures.

HECATE: So sad.

ANNE: What is so sad? You have to tell me, Hecate. Remember confession is good for the soul... Provided you have a soul.

HECATE: Poor Miss Desdemona.

ANNE: What about Desdemona?

HECATE: In a fit of unfounded jealousy...

ANNE: Yes? What happens in a fit of unfounded jealousy?

HECATE: Her husband...

ANNE: Othello? What about him?

HECATE: He will strangle poor, lovely Miss Desdemona.

ANNE: Oh my God. And what about Juliet? Did you see something about Juliet?

HECATE: So young... So tragic.

ANNE: What? What is so tragic?

HECATE: Because of a terrible misunderstanding...

ANNE: Yes? Yes?

HECATE: She will take her own life.

ANNE: Oh no.

HECATE: And Miss Katherine.

ANNE: What about Katherine?

HECATE: She will suffer the worst fate of all.

ANNE: What could be worse than strangulation and suicide?

HECATE: She will marry Petruchio.

ANNE: (*horrified*) No!!!

HECATE: She will cook for him.

ANNE: Horrors!!!

HECATE: She will clean his house.

ANNE: The beast!!!

HECATE: She will wash his clothes.

ANNE: Oh, the infamy.

HECATE: And, then... Then... she will iron them.

ANNE: (*distraught*) Stop, please stop. I can't listen to anymore.

HECATE: She will get fat with him.

ANNE: (*catty*) Well, she always was a little on the heavy side.

HECATE: But she will fight with him constantly.

ANNE: That's our Kate.

HECATE: And then the two of them will have incredible make-up sex.

ANNE: Every cloud has its silver lining.

HECATE: Which will result in a dozen screaming brats.

ANNE: (*appalled*) Oh the barbarity. The barbarity. Poor, poor Katherine.

HECATE: (*shrugs*) Well... You asked. (*she exits*)

ANNE: (*to audience*) Ladies... Ladies... Ladies... I hope you've been paying close attention. There's a cautionary lesson to be learned from the fates suffered by dear Desdemona, lovely Juliet, and outspoken Katherine. Men can be wonderful diversions, God knows. And sometimes they're even necessary. But take it from someone who's been there. Never... ever... lose your head over one.

(*Lights down*)

THE END