

Shakespeare

CROWD

(singing)

SHAKESPEARE!

SHAKESPEARE

(polite greetings as HE works the room)

Hi... hi... how are you, thanks for coming... good to see you, yes you can touch me,
 ooh, I wanna talk to you...

(as the excited guest stands)

Not now.

(arriving at Nigel)

So... Nigel Bottom—playwright, poet and prestigious prodigy.

(to the crowd)

Oooh, that was a lot of alliteration—

(sing-song)

OCCUPATIONAL HA-ZARD!

(playing to crowd, then back to Nigel)

So—Nicky Bottom's little brother. His "secret weapon", all grown up. And who is
 this delightful damsel, this maiden fair, this feast for the eyes?

NIGEL

Oh, um... This is Portia.

SHAKESPEARE

Portia. Good name.

PORTIA

PORTIA stares stage-struck, mouth quivering, breathing quickening

SHAKESPEARE

That's right. This is happening. Just breathe...

PORTIA

M-m-m-master Shakespeare...

SHE bows and is now so tipsy she collapses to the ground.

SHAKESPEARE

Aw, she's bedazzled. You like that word? I made it up, it's what I do!

(turns to crowd)

Let's drink to that!

CROWD

HUZZAH!!!!

NIGEL helps Portia to her feet. SHE takes another huge gulp. She gets woozy.

PORTIA

I think I need a bit of a lie down.

SHE tries to sit on sofa but falls behind it.

SHAKESPEARE

So! Nigel. What are you and that brother of yours working on? A tragedy? A comedy? A tragic attempt at comedy?

(to the crowd)

See what I did there?

(THEY don't laugh enough)

SEE WHAT I DID??

THEY laugh harder.

NIGEL

Actually, Nick doesn't want me to tell anyone.

SHAKESPEARE

Oh, God, he's so paranoid. Always has been. Even when I was a lowly actor in his sad little troupe, he was so *insecure*. Of course, with you as his partner, he has even more reason to be. I've read your sonnet.

HE puts a hand on Nigel's shoulder, nods like "yeah, that's right, I read it." NIGEL waits for a comment. SHAKESPEARE finds a bit of dust on Nigel's coat, flicks it off.

Nigel is in agony, waiting.

It's good. Quite good. I'd love to read more.

(feigning surprise)

Oh—is that your folio?

HE points to Nigel's leather notebook.

NIGEL

What, this? Oh, this is just—a collection of random lines and thoughts...

SHAKESPEARE

Would you like me to give it a looky-loo? What am I saying? Of course you would! I'm Shakespeare!

