

*Taming Shakespeare*

by

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FADE IN:

INT. ROOM – MORNING

An unidentified room dominated by a large window. Intense sunlight drowns our scene, rendering it dreamlike. It seems like a long-ago time, centuries past, but the extreme light makes it nearly impossible to determine the era.

A stack of paper sits on a desk. Due to the bright glare from the light, we can't see if anything is written or printed on the pages. The window is slowly opened, perhaps magically. The paper is blown off the desk, falls to the floor, and lands against the wall, forgotten....

FADE TO BLACK.

A VOICE fades in over the blackness, speaking the words of William Shakespeare: *The Taming of the Shrew*, in progress.

LORD (VO)

O, how like a swine he lies! I  
will practice on this drunken  
man. If he were wrapp'd in sweet  
clothes, rings put upon his  
fingers, would not the beggar  
then forget himself?

EXT. STAGEPLAY THEATRE – EVENING

FADE UP on a small community theatre in a rural neighborhood. A hand-painted sign announces the current production:

Stageplay Theatre Presents:  
The Taming of the Shrew  
a comedy by William Shakespeare  
Weekends in October  
Join us in our 20th year: 1979-1999

As we read the sign, the voice of a female SERVANT is heard replying to the Lord.

SERVANT (VO)

My lord, he shall think by our  
true diligence that he is no less  
what we say he is.

FADE TO:

INT. STAGEPLAY THEATRE (AUDIENCE) – EVENING

Among other AUDIENCE MEMBERS, we find ELLIS STRAHAN. Ellis is a clean-cut, well-dressed man in his late 20s. He intently watches the stage as we watch him.

With the Lord, Sly speaks to his alleged wife, actually a male PAGE in disguise who speaks in a falsetto voice that is obvious to all but Sly.

SLY (VO)

What, would you make me mad? Am  
not I Christopher Sly?

LORD (VO)

Thou art a lord, and nothing but  
a lord: thou hast a wife far more  
beautiful than any woman.

PAGE (VO)

How fares my noble lord? I am  
your wife.

Ellis looks down at his watch.

CU: Ellis's watch reads 8:20.

SLY (VO)

Am I a lord? And have I such a  
wife? Or do I dream? Or have I  
dream'd till now?

FADE TO:

CU: Ellis's watch reads 10:55.

INT. STAGEPLAY THEATRE (STAGE) – NIGHT

The show winds down. On stage, HORTENSIO and LUCENTIO are performing the last few lines.

HORTENSIO

Go thy ways; thou hast tamed a  
curst shrew.

LUCENTIO

'Tis a wonder, by your leave, she  
will be tamed so.

The lights come down as the production comes to a close.

The audience reacts with droning APPLAUSE as the ACTORS come out for their curtain. As this sound fades to silence, it is overtaken by the sound of Ellis's voice.

ELLIS (VO)

Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*. It had always been one of my favorites.

The actors file off stage, and some of the CREW begins to wander on. Some audience members exit the theatre, others remain in their seats.

ELLIS (VO)

I'd spent quite a few years studying this stuff, so I had to stay behind for the Q&A session. Besides, I had finally arranged for some of Granddad's money to get soundly invested –

Ellis's voiceover is momentarily interrupted by the sound of a fork SCRAPING a plate, and Ellis briefly speaks with his mouth full.

ELLIS (VO, Cont.)

– I needed a diversion to get my mind off things.

About a quarter of the audience remains in the seating area. Some of the actors have returned to the stage in their street clothes, joining the DIRECTOR and a few other CREW MEMBERS. Ellis watches as an audience Q&A session begins. We continue to hear only his voiceover, with the sounds of the theatre muted.

ELLIS (VO)

Most of the questions were the usual crap. You know: "How did you memorize your lines?" "Why wasn't everyone dressed in tights?" That sort of thing. I was actually starting to think about taking off, and then it happened.

Out in the audience, Ellis yawns and gathers his coat. He starts to stand up when a YOUNG WOMAN in a group of COLLEGE STUDENTS raises her hand. She's met with a nod from the director, and we join the action-in-present.

YOUNG WOMAN

How come the story that opened the play was never finished? You know, the drunk guy?

DIRECTOR

Well, that's all Shakespeare wrote. That opening bookend – the induction – was it.

YOUNG WOMAN

Okay, so why didn't he write an ... outduction?

Ellis sits back down, intrigued.

DIRECTOR

(to audience)

For those who aren't aware, she's referring to the start of the play, with the drunk Christopher Sly, the lord, and servants. The start of the production is an entirely different story, where the lord tricks Sly into thinking he's a lord awakening after a fifteen-year sleep, and the lord's page, in disguise as a woman, is Sly's wife. *The Taming of the Shrew* was sort of presented to Sly – a play within a play.

ELLIS (VO)

It was a brilliant question, if only she'd realized what she was really asking.

DIRECTOR (Cont.)

This is the only instance of Shakespeare using an induction. Closest he comes is a prologue in a few other plays, but that always sets the foundation that the story is built upon, which this does not. Far as why he didn't write an end to the story, no one knows for sure. There are a few theories, like the conclusion was lost before the play was printed. There's even a controversial closing to the bookend floating around, but it's widely agreed that it's a fake.

Finally, we both hear and see Ellis speak:

ELLIS

Maybe Shakespeare was planning a sequel.

Everyone LAUGHS at the comment – except Ellis: A grin merely plays across his face.

ELLIS (VO)

And that's when it hit me. Or I should say, that's when it all came back to me.

EXT. LONDON SIDEWALK – NIGHT

About ten years earlier. Ellis and LAUREN MARRUS (an attractive American grad student in her early 20s) are walking hand-in-hand. Ellis's book bag swings from his shoulder. A small street sign reads "Park St." Not many other people are on the road.

A taxicab drives by, splashing a puddle in its wake. Ellis kicks a discarded paper cup on the sidewalk.

ELLIS (VO)

It was London, back in 1989. Grad school at the University of Enfield. That was really when the wheels were put into motion.

They stop at an intersection, and more cars drive by. Lauren looks up at the full moon, which is blanketed by a cloud.

ELLIS

So we're all set for after  
finals. I called for  
reservations. Our romantic  
weekend awaits.

LAUREN

That B&B in Weston-super-Mare?  
Oh, that is so awesome; I can't  
wait!

Ellis stops. Lauren drops his hand and continues on for a few  
steps before realizing he's no longer next to her.

LAUREN

What is it?

She backs up to where he is and looks at what he's found:  
Behind a building is a brightly-painted backhoe.

ELLIS

What's going on over there?

LAUREN

They found The Globe buried under  
the Anchor Terrace building.

ELLIS

Shakespeare's Globe?

LAUREN

You know another?

Ellis grabs her hand and leads her up to the side of the  
building.

EXT. JUST OUTSIDE EXCAVATION SITE - NIGHT

Ellis and Lauren walk up to the site. Oddly, there's still  
work being done at night. The backhoe is clearing dirt next  
to a shallow pit. Nothing but a makeshift rope fence with  
wooden stakes surrounds the scene, leaving little to stop  
Ellis as he leads Lauren inside the site.

EXT. EXCAVATION SITE - NIGHT

They stand in a shadowed area to avoid being seen. From here,  
they can see a half-dozen ARCHAEOLOGISTS.

ELLIS (VO)

The Globe: where Shakespeare's plays were performed. For English lit students, this was the promised land. Until we came up to the site, I was skeptical, but most construction workers don't work at night like this. But when it's archaeologists digging up something of value, all bets are off.

LAUREN

They've been working here until midnight every night for almost a month. I'm surprised you haven't heard about this.

ELLIS

Not paying attention to too much else when you're around.

An adorable blushing smile appears on Lauren's face.

LAUREN

Thank you.

ELLIS (VO)

Our relationship was intense, after all. One where you don't pay much attention to the outside world, so it's no surprise that I didn't notice this around the corner. But once I saw it, I wasn't interested in much else, I admit.

Ellis's voiceover CLEARS ITS THROAT. The excavation scene doesn't get too exciting, so Ellis takes Lauren by the hand, and they quickly duck back out to the street.

ELLIS (VO)

I was amazed how lax the security was. Just about anyone could go in and take a walk around.

INT. LAUREN'S APARTMENT BUILDING (HALLWAY)- LATER THAT NIGHT

Ellis and Lauren arrive at her doorstep, still holding hands. She takes her keys out of a coat pocket and unlocks the door. They go in together, and Ellis pulls her into an embrace, kissing her passionately.

INT. LAUREN'S APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM, CONTINUOUS) - NIGHT

Still entangled with Ellis, Lauren GIGGLES as she kicks the door closed behind them. Seemingly attached, they stumble into the darkened entrance, and almost crash into a table by the door.

After an audible STRUGGLE with the wall light switch, Lauren throws her keys down on the table, on top of a stack of mail.

LAUREN  
(giggling)  
Careful, El! Watch it!

Ellis lets her go. He quickly takes off his coat, throws it on the floor, and pulls Lauren back to him for another quick kiss. He takes a step back from her and takes his key ring out of his pocket. She smiles knowingly. He drops his book bag to the floor.

Ellis shines a small flashlight on the key ring at her legs, slowly moving its blue light up her body. He stops with a sly smile. Lauren raises an eyebrow and GIGGLES.

They stand, facing each other, staring intently into each other's eyes.

INT. LAUREN'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Ellis and Lauren are in bed. Lauren is sound asleep, but Ellis lies wide awake, staring at a digital clock on the nightstand. "2:12" glows on the orange digital readout.

ELLIS (VO)  
I couldn't sleep that night, and  
I knew exactly why. I made one  
last check -

Ellis gently rolls over and hears Lauren LIGHTLY SNORE. He rolls back to his side of the bed and gets out slowly.

ELLIS (VO, Cont.)  
- and headed back out.

He dresses quickly, grabs his book bag, and exits the bedroom.

EXT. OUTSIDE EXCAVATION SITE - NIGHT

It's utterly quiet at the excavation site as Ellis arrives and sneaks back into the area where he and Lauren were hiding earlier.

EXT. EXCAVATION SITE - NIGHT

Ellis is alone. He stands back in the shadows for a minute to confirm this, then walks toward the main part of the site.

ELLIS (VO)

Have you ever had one of those moments when you know your life's about to change? I don't quite know what I was doing there, but I knew it would change my life.

Ellis descends into the shallow pit, entering the excavated remains of the Globe's entryway.

ELLIS (VO)

I went to England to study literature, but also to find something that would change my life. After a year of nothing, we met and I was convinced that our relationship was that something. Instead, I found myself at The Globe, looking for something else.

EXT. EXCAVATION SITE (BELOW) - NIGHT

Ellis walks around the site. The full moon is overhead; things are illuminated well, but there's not much recognizable. He walks around bits of small construction equipment and partially exposed walls and through separate roped-off areas.

In the distance, Ellis hears a CAR DRIVE BY. He pauses long enough to confirm that it didn't stop.

ELLIS (VO)

Anyway, as soon as I walked into that pit, I knew my life wouldn't be the same.

Ellis walks into a hollowed-out area adjacent to the shallow pit. He takes his key ring out of his pocket and shines its tiny blue flashlight around, revealing what appears to be a small excavated room.

Piles of dirt line the area, and wood braces support some of the rocky walls. He starts to walk into the room as we back out and into the main pit.

ELLIS (VO)

I must admit, I felt at home in there. I knew that's where I was supposed to be, but not yet why I was supposed to be there.

Eventually, the flashlight beam settles on the ground, in a corner of the room, and Ellis pulls his book bag off his shoulder. We start to move closer, to see what he has found, when an ALARM CLOCK BUZZ brings us back to:

INT. LAUREN'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - DAY

Lauren wakes up and hits a button on the BUZZING alarm clock. Ellis is next to her in bed. He rolls over and sits up.

ELLIS

Morning. Sleep well?

Lauren smiles at him.

LAUREN

You know I always sleep well after a good workout.

Ellis gives her a smile, but not the kind she was looking for.

LAUREN (Cont.)

Something up?

ELLIS

I- Umm, nothing.

He walks over to his book bag in the corner and zips it closed.

LAUREN

Okay, well, I have a meeting with Professor Hanley in forty-five minutes, and you've got class in an hour, so we'd better get moving. Dinner tonight at seven?

ELLIS

Jack's?

LAUREN

Sounds good.

Ellis walks around to her side of the bed, gives her a quick kiss, and heads to the bathroom. Lauren CLEARS HER THROAT, and Ellis stops in his tracks.

ELLIS

Oh, umm, ladies first, of course.

Walking back over to her, his foot brushes the side of a small notepad, pushing it under the bed. He leans down and gives her another kiss, much more passionate than the first.

INT. JACK'S PUB - NIGHT

Lauren and Ellis sit together at a booth in the corner of a mostly-empty London pub. Lauren is furious, and Ellis is trying to calm her down.

LAUREN

Is it true? Is it?

ELLIS

They're not the same -

LAUREN

What's the difference? Please, tell me. Educate me.

ELLIS

They're not the same! Look.

Ellis tries to slide a document to her across the table. She pushes it back at him.

ELLIS (Cont.)

Look, if my idea is the same as yours, then all ideas about feminism in Pre-Raphaelite literature are the same!

LAUREN

They called it the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood! Considering that they're all men, how many different ideas could there be?

ELLIS

Okay, I graduate a whole year ahead of you. I'll help you with whatever you need, and your thesis will end up a thousand times better than this anyway.

LAUREN

I think you should go.

An awkward pause, as the tension visibly rises.

ELLIS

The food will be here soon. Why don't we just eat, and we can talk about this later, when you've calmed down.

LAUREN

Don't expect me to "calm down" any time soon. If you're not going to go, then maybe I will.

She glares at him, and they just sit and stare at each other for a moment, speechless.

ELLIS

You're kidding, right?

LAUREN

Enjoy your dinner.

Lauren briskly stands and heads for the door.

ELLIS

Lauren, come on, wait. Sweetie, please, don't make such a big deal over this.

Lauren stops short of the door, but doesn't turn back to him.

LAUREN

I want your key to my apartment  
back. Now.

ELLIS

You're not serious?

She turns and walks slowly back to the table, but doesn't look at Ellis. She looks at his feet under the table.

He pulls his key ring out of his pocket, and just looks at the keys for a moment. Eventually, a last-ditch effort comes to mind: He begins to shine the tiny flashlight on her, playfully. Lauren doesn't respond, so after a moment he gives up.

He removes a key from the key ring and places it on the table, on top of the document. He pushes both over to what was her side of the table.

She takes the key and leaves the pub, without ever looking at Ellis, or the document on the table.

ELLIS (VO)

So, that was it. I was pretty distraught, but it wasn't anything that a lot of scotch – and a Scottish undergrad – couldn't take care of. Or at least distract me for a while. The following year, you presented a new and better thesis idea and graduated *cum laude*. I used the Pre-Raph idea, and, well, I graduated. Actually, I'm not really sure why I even mentioned the breakup: You were there.

INT. RESTAURANT – AFTERNOON

It is ten years after London and a little over a year after Ellis attended *The Taming of the Shrew*. He sits across from Lauren in a deli in Hoboken, New Jersey.

There's a long pause as Ellis's story sinks in with Lauren. He continues eating his lunch, as we've heard but not seen until now. Lauren takes a drink from a glass of Coke. She swallows and just gazes at Ellis for a moment before finally breaking the silence.

LAUREN

I'm not sure why you mentioned any of it. I know I was there, Ellis, but why am I here?

ELLIS

Huh?

LAUREN

Why am I here? Why did you bother telling me this whole story?

Ellis just smiles, then shovels a forkful of coleslaw into his mouth.

LAUREN

What?

ELLIS

Well, it's just that I had a thought. Something you could help me out with that might interest you.

LAUREN

Come on, Ellis, what is this?

ELLIS

It's right up your alley.

LAUREN

You're not saying what I think you're saying?

ELLIS

Come on, isn't it obvious at this point? I've laid it all out for you. What do you think I possibly could have found lying around at Anchor Terrace, huh?

Lauren shakes her head.

LAUREN

No, no, no.

ELLIS

You can believe that it's at least plausible.

LAUREN

You're expecting me to believe that you found a sequel to *The Taming of the Shrew* just lying there in the dirt? Ellis, Shakespeare didn't write sequels. He left that for Hollywood.

ELLIS

What do you call *Henry the Fourth, Part 2*? or *Henry the Sixth, Parts 2 and 3*?

LAUREN

Come on, those aren't sequels, and you know it!

ELLIS

Yeah, all right, that may be true. But why's it so hard to swallow that Shakespeare wrote a sequel to *Shrew*?

LAUREN

Oh, right. *Shrew 2: The Bitch is Back*.

Ellis LAUGHS.

ELLIS

No, come on now. Do you find a "part two" all that hard to believe?

LAUREN

Who said I found it hard to believe? What I find hard to believe is your claim that William Shakespeare wrote it, but never performed it, never published it, and just left it lying around the lobby of the Globe Theatre to be discovered 400 years later. Besides, I....

Lauren trails off, distracted, before Ellis prompts her to continue.

LAUREN (Cont.)

Even if it exists, who's gonna believe it's real? That's not hard to swallow, El: It's just plain dumb. Is that why you came to see me, or were you hoping to resurrect something between us?

ELLIS

(overlapping)

Why is it so hard to swallow? The clues are all there: just dots waiting to be connected. And you're smart enough to know that.

LAUREN

I said it's dumb, not hard to swallow, if you were listening.

ELLIS

Huh?

Lauren doesn't answer. She just takes a bite of the corned beef on rye that has been sitting in front of her.

LAUREN

Never mind.

She takes a pickle off her plate and gestures at Ellis with it.

LAUREN (Cont.)

You're sure you didn't have something else planned for me? The word "rekindle" comes to mind....

Ellis CHUCKLES and flashes her a quick wink. She licks up and down the length of the pickle, then bites off a big chunk. Ellis's eyes widen.

ELLIS

Don't worry about that. I think I know where that road leads.

Lauren smiles.

LAUREN

I didn't say I was worried.

ELLIS

Glad to hear it.

LAUREN

Anyway, this won't be easy, you know. There'll be a lot of questions, a lot of tests ... it'll be years before there can be any definitive answer about legitimacy. I mean, we're talking ... ten years at the minimum, for there to be any real consensus in the literary community.

Ellis LAUGHS boisterously. Lauren perks up.

LAUREN

What?

ELLIS

Ten years, huh? Ha! Well, just so happens I've all but completed arrangements for an off-Broadway theatre to stage this play within a year. And I'm already working on a publishing contract. By the time there's any consensus in the literary community, the show will already be making money in the theatrical community!

LAUREN

So wait, you're saying you already have a contract?

Ellis nods.

ELLIS

Yep. Still have to dot the t's and cross the i's. But they've got the space, and I've got Granddad's money pulling in 5%. Throw in Mr. Shakespeare's play, and the specifics are just a formality, from what I understand. We have a gentleman's agreement.

Lauren shakes her head.

LAUREN

It's a little more complicated than that, El. You don't stage a major production on a gentleman's agreement, even off Broadway.

ELLIS

You do when the theatre's owned by a dink and you've got enough money to throw at the guy.

LAUREN

Okay, okay, wait a second though. You're saying you've lined up a theatre, the money, and the script. And you claim rekindling isn't fitting into our conversation.

Ellis smirks.

ELLIS

Well, I didn't exactly say that, but go on.

LAUREN

Then what, exactly, did you say?

ELLIS

Look, I'm not saying I'd mind if ... if we.... Never mind. For the sake of argument, we'll say I said what you said I said. Er, or something like that. "I've lined up a theatre, the money, and the script." Go on.

Lauren pauses. She knows he's hiding something, but isn't sure what, or if he plans to reveal it. She decides to go on:

LAUREN

Right. And you're not just trying to get back together with me?

Ellis innocently takes a sip of his Coke. Lauren gives him a dirty look, then continues.

LAUREN (Cont.)

Okay, then what, exactly, do you need me for? Not as the director?

ELLIS

I'm sure we could arrange something along those lines if you're interested. But the thing is, I want you for more than that.

LAUREN

Aha! I knew there had to be more to this. Okay, you've piqued my interest. What more are you looking for?

Lauren sits up in her booth and attentively watches and listens to him.

ELLIS

This is kind of difficult for me to ask, Lauren. I mean, we have a past together, and I don't want that to get in the way. But assuming I can convince you to help out, here's what I need for you to do for me - or, with me....

Ellis starts EXPLAINING himself, but the sound of a TRAIN fades up and obscures what he's saying.

He pulls a folder, labeled TAMING, out of his briefcase and hands it to Lauren. She begins leafing through the folder's contents as she continues listening to Ellis's explanations.

FADE TO:

INT. TRAIN (MOVING) – NIGHT

The train sound gets louder as it turns out to be the PATH, heading into New York City from New Jersey. Lauren sits alone by the window, with a large canvas bag open at her feet, the TAMING folder right on top. A notebook labeled "Royale Theatre, Hoboken NJ" sits in her lap as she stares out the window at the Hudson River.

The skyline of Manhattan lights the night ahead. Lauren looks from the majestic, soaring buildings of the city to the dingy notebook in her lap and SIGHS. She drops the notebook into her bag and picks up the TAMING folder.

She looks from the contents of the folder to the skyline ahead, and shakes her head. A decision has been reached. She takes her cell phone out of her bag and dials a number.

LAUREN (into phone)

Ellis? It's yours. I'm in.

Lauren hangs up the phone as her train races into the tunnel, returns it to her bag, and looks back at the TAMING papers.

LAUREN

Up to my neck.

EXT. ROYALE THEATRE – DAY

Ellis walks up to the front door of the Royale Theatre near the Hoboken waterfront. A stray dog lurks outside, next to a large sign. The sign has "Royale Theatre" printed in large letters, "Next Show" below that, and nothing else. The dog watches as Ellis enters the theatre.

INT. ROYALE THEATRE – DAY

Lauren stands at the foot of the stage, script in hand, directing a rehearsal. The assistant director, EILEEN CALLAHAN (30ish, tall, short red hair, and slightly too fashionable glasses) stands next to her, holding a clipboard.

The only scenery on stage is a fake fireplace and two folding chairs. Two ACTORS, both in their late 30s, stand at the front of the stage, looking down at Lauren.

LAUREN

Okay, okay. Let me show you.

Lauren walks up a few steps and onto the stage. Eileen rests her back against the stage and flips through some pages on her clipboard, as Ellis strides into the theatre, briefcase in hand. Eileen sees him and smiles.

EILEEN

Can I help you?

Ellis points over Eileen's shoulder at Lauren, who has her back to them, pointing out something in the script to one of the actors.

EILEEN

Oh.

ELLIS

Maybe next time.

Eileen CHUCKLES, nodding.

EILEEN

I guess I'll just have to wait till then.

She turns back to the stage.

EILEEN (Cont.)

Lauren. You have a visitor.

Lauren turns around and sees Ellis.

LAUREN

Ellis? What are you doing here?

ELLIS

I had to see you.

LAUREN

Can't it wait? I'm working now.

ELLIS

It could, but ... well, come on outside. I just need a minute.

She gives him a hard look for a moment, and then he beams his best "trust me" smile, complete with puppy-dog eyes. Lauren SIGHS and turns back to the actors.

LAUREN

Okay, I'll be back in five minutes, guys.

She turns to Eileen and gives her a blank look. Eileen nods and glances over at Ellis.

EILEEN

Yeah, sure, go ahead. We'll keep working the first-date scene.

Eileen watches Ellis as he follows Lauren out of the theatre.

EXT. HOBOKEN WATERFRONT – DAY

Ellis and Lauren walk up to the waterfront.

LAUREN

Well?

He beckons for her to follow him closer to the water's edge to take in a clear view of Manhattan. The sun gleams majestically off the buildings in the distance. A ferry works its way toward the New Jersey side.

LAUREN

Are we going to walk to the city?  
Last I checked, you still weren't walking on water.

Ellis looks at her and smiles.

ELLIS

No. But we're going to put on a show there.

Lauren YELPS.

LAUREN

Really?

Ellis holds up the briefcase.

ELLIS

The ink is dry. We go up in ten months. Columbus Theatre. With Lauren Marrus, director.

Lauren gives Ellis a big hug, surprising him. He hugs back, just getting comfortable before she excitedly jumps back again and gives him a quick, impromptu kiss on the forehead.

INT. DINER – MORNING

In a small diner in Manhattan, STEVE SHEPPARD and TINA SUMMER, both in their mid-to-late 20s and attractive Manhattanites, sit at a booth near the front door. It's the start of a hot summer day and the diner is buzzing with breakfast traffic.

Steve and Tina both pick at their breakfasts, silently, as Steve reads the Arts section of *The New York Times*, neatly folded to an article. Tina alternates between looking at him and watching people come in and out of the diner, through the door behind Steve.

TINA

This is good.

Steve doesn't look up at her.

STEVE

Hmm? Oh, your French toast? Glad to hear it.

TINA

No, Steve. Us, together, again.

Steve looks up at her.

STEVE

Whoa, slow down. It was just one night. We have a long way to go before "together."

TINA

We had one morning, too.

STEVE

Look, Tina. Just ... look.

Tina nods morosely, expecting what he's about to say. Except he doesn't say it. He just glares at her for a moment, and then goes back to his article.

STEVE (Cont.)

Never mind. You know.

Tina watches as he finishes the article he was reading, brusquely refolds the paper to the front of the Arts section, and SLAPS the paper back down on the table. Tina jumps.

TINA

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to -

STEVE

No, it's not you. It's ... this guy just can't write his way out of a wet sack!

He gestures to the paper.

STEVE (Cont.)

"Looking forward to a new musical revue opening this season." Come on, that's crap! No one looks forward to a new revue.

TINA

Don't sweat it, Steve. You and I both know you're better.

STEVE

I think you've flattered me enough -

TINA

It wasn't flattery, darling.

STEVE

Don't call me that.

TINA

Okay, sorry. What?

STEVE

I know I won't replace "New York Times Arts Critic Bernard Merriman," at least not without a breakthrough story. No one even reads the *Local Daily* on their own. Hell, I don't even read it. I read *The Times*.

Behind Steve, we see Ellis walk into the diner, holding a metal briefcase. He pauses for a second at the door, scanning to find Lauren. Tina spots him.

TINA

Hey, you want a breakthrough story?

STEVE

What, you're a reporter now?

TINA

No. But you are lucky you got lonely enough to call me last night, since I do have a story for you.

STEVE

I'm listening.

TINA

See that guy who just walked in?

Tina points over Steve's shoulder at Ellis, who is scanning the restaurant for Lauren. He finds her, alone, in a corner booth, and heads to her table. We follow, as Steve and Tina's conversation fades into the b.g.

ELLIS

Sorry I'm late. Line at the bank before it even opened.

He sits down across from her, placing the briefcase on the table between them. Lauren has a short stack of pancakes in front of her, and the Arts section of *The New York Times* folded open on the table.

LAUREN

It's okay. How did it go?

ELLIS

No problems whatsoever. Everything's taken care of and ... well, have a look.

Ellis removes a key from his pocket, unlocks the briefcase, and opens it. Foam padding lines the inside of the case, and in the middle is an old document resting on a piece of cardboard. The document is in a protective plastic sleeve.

From a pocket in the foam on the top side of the briefcase, he takes out a pair of white cotton gloves.

ELLIS (Cont.)

Here, put these on.

He hands the gloves to Lauren, who quickly licks syrup off her fork and places it down on the plate. She pushes the plate and newspaper aside, licks off her fingers, then puts the gloves on and picks up the document. She gently takes it out of the plastic sleeve.

It is a small stack of 17th Century quarto sheets, crinkled and aged. On the top is the title page, with centered text:

The Second part of THE TAMING OF THE SHREW  
 in which the finall end shall be reached:  
 A play having never staled with the stage.  
 Written by Will. Shakespeare.  
 LONDON,  
 Printed by Iohn Danter, and are  
 to be sold by Thomas Millington,  
 at the doore vnder Saint Peters Church in Cornwall.  
 1602.

A fanciful image adorns the center of the page, just below Shakespeare's name. The page is awe-inspiring in its detail and authenticity.

Lauren looks at the play and marvels at it. A tear forms in her eye.

LAUREN

It's so ... beautiful.

ELLIS

I know, isn't it? It's a full text quarto; the play is all right there. We have to do the cue-scripts for each of the characters if you wanted to run more "authentic" rehearsals.

LAUREN

You think we should? I mean, I can do that, if you think. I had a class at Enfield specifically on how to direct actors when they see only their own lines. They'll see the trees, but not the forest. Good idea.

ELLIS

It could be used as an angle to publicize the show, too, since we'd be doing it how they did it four hundred years ago. Well, only we'd cast women in the female roles, of course. Anyway, more importantly, it protects us: If we're only giving out individual character's lines, then all the actors would have to get together to get a complete script.

LAUREN

Are we calling it reconstruction or original? Cue-scripts wouldn't make much sense if it's reconstruction.

ELLIS

Original. Too long to be reconstruction anyway. But you're our expert.

LAUREN

This is going to work, isn't it? I mean, we're going to pull this off.

ELLIS

Yep.

Lauren flips through the pages, quickly scanning the play. Ellis just watches her for a moment before breaking the silence.

ELLIS

I had a thought, as I was picking this up. Hear me out.

LAUREN

Okay.

ELLIS

We shouldn't hold auditions for the sequel.

Lauren stops reading and looks up.

LAUREN

How else are we going to get a cast? By interviewing waiters?

ELLIS

We'll audition it as the original *Shrew*. I mean, same characters, right?

Lauren looks back down at the play, nodding.

LAUREN

Yeah, for the most part. But, why?

ELLIS

Because we need to keep this to ourselves for as long as possible. If we put out an open casting call for a recently-discovered Shakespeare play, it'll be mobbed. And not just with actors.

LAUREN

The media. *The Times* would have a field day with this.

Lauren taps *The Times* on the table next to the briefcase.

ELLIS

Exactly.

LAUREN

I see. I guess it'll work. When do we reveal what we're really doing, though?

ELLIS

When we start publicity. We'll tell the cast after we've signed them and everything's straight. Have them sign a confidentiality agreement or something.

LAUREN

Right.

ELLIS  
 (deliberately)  
 Less people we have to trust.

Lauren returns the document and the gloves and slides her breakfast back over. She picks up her fork and takes another bite.

ELLIS (Cont.)  
 Lauren, I've thought this through  
 and I really think it's best to  
 do it this way.

LAUREN  
 No, I'm not disagreeing. Just ...  
 thinking.

ELLIS  
 Well, start thinking about how  
 you're going to direct something  
 that's never been performed.

LAUREN  
 There's time for that. For now,  
 lock that back up and order  
 yourself some breakfast. I hate  
 eating alone.

ELLIS  
 We haven't had breakfast together  
 in a long time.

Lauren smiles at him.

LAUREN  
 That's not what I meant.

EXT. COLUMBUS THEATRE - EVENING

A GUARD stands in the doorway of the theatre, stopping PEOPLE and checking a clipboard before they walk inside. A small sign on the door reads "*Taming of the Shrew*: Auditions by invitation only today." We hear those auditions, from inside the theatre, in progress:

LUCENTIO AUDITIONER (OS)  
 Mistress, what's your opinion of  
 your sister?

BIANCA AUDITIONER (OS)  
That, being mad herself, she's  
madly mated.

EXT. MANHATTAN STREET (MOVING) – EVENING

Steve strides down the sidewalk. He takes a quick look at his watch, then pulls out his cell phone and dials.

STEVE (into phone)  
Chris. Steve. I'm on my way to  
the theatre now.

CHRIS, Steve's editor, has an oddly familiar voice:

CHRIS (OS, on phone)  
Okay, so you were about to tell  
me what my new story is. Should I  
be holding the front page for  
you?

STEVE (into phone)  
Front page material or not, I  
don't think this will exactly be  
finished tomorrow.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)  
You wanna tell me what this story  
is, kid, or should I just guess?

STEVE (into phone)  
Don't be sly; I'm getting to it.  
These auditions I'm heading to –

CHRIS (OS, on phone)  
*Taming of the Shrew*, you said?

STEVE (into phone)  
Right. Well, sort of. Only there  
might be more. Or less. It's like  
I said: The contact name for the  
audition is the same name my  
source gave me as publishing the  
*Shrew* sequel. Obviously, I'm  
thinking there's more to this  
audition than meets the eye.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE – EVENING

Inside the theatre, Lauren, Eileen, and Ellis sit in the audience watching actors auditioning on stage. HEIDI (a blonde woman in her early 20s) reads for Katharina opposite KEN (a tall black man in his mid-30s) as Petruchio.

KEN (as Petruchio)  
I say it is the moon.

HEIDI (as Katharina)  
I know it is the moon.

KEN (as Petruchio)  
Nay, then you lie: It is the  
blessed sun.

HEIDI (as Katharina)  
Then, God be bless'd, it is the  
blessed sun: But sun it is not,  
when you say it is not; And the  
moon changes even as your mind.  
What you will have it named, it  
is; and so it shall be –

LAUREN  
(loudly)  
Thank you; that's good there.

She leans over to talk with Eileen and Ellis out of earshot of all the actors.

LAUREN  
I think I've seen enough for  
Katharina and Bianca, but I'm not  
sure about Lucentio yet. It's a  
pretty important role for us.

EILEEN  
Yeah, I'd call that a lead role,  
from what I've seen.

ELLIS  
Wait, you've seen the script?

Lauren SIGHS.

EILEEN

Don't worry, Ellis. I know what I'm doing. I'm the assistant director. It's not like I just walked in off the street. You can trust me.

ELLIS

Listen, Eileen, I just want to keep my show under wraps. As long as you know to keep this thing to yourself, we're good.

LAUREN

We don't have time for this. Look, pick a scene with Lucentio. Try and find something with him, Bianca, Petruchio, and Katharina.

She stands and walks up to the stage.

EXT. COLUMBUS THEATRE – EVENING

Steve arrives outside the theatre, still talking on his cell phone. Several ACTORS are walking out, a few with dejected looks on their faces.

STEVE (into phone)

Yeah, the Columbus Theatre; I'm walking up to it right now.

He tries to nonchalantly walk right into the theatre, but the guard steps in front of him to bar his ingress.

GUARD

Sorry, sir. Auditions by appointment only.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)

Are they gonna let you in for an interview? Did you call the producer or something?

Steve holds a "wait a moment" finger up to the guard. As he speaks, he subtly glances over at the guard's clipboard.

STEVE (into phone)

I don't know. Did you hear back from Woody Allen's people yet?

CHRIS (OS, on phone)

What?

STEVE (to guard)

Look, pal, I don't have time for this. I gotta finish this call, okay?

He indicates the phone. The guard taps the clipboard and shakes his head "no."

STEVE (into phone)

Hey, you tell them if they want Bill Clay, they're gonna have to pay Bill Clay's asking price!

The guard scans down the names on his clipboard and finds "Clay, Wm." listed. He waves Steve into the theatre.

GUARD

Go ahead.

STEVE

Thanks. (into phone) No, no, tell him to forget it!

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (CONTINUOUS) – EVENING

Steve enters the back of the theatre, still on his phone.

STEVE (into phone, Cont.)

Look, if they won't go to thirty on that commercial, then you can tell them to find another actor!

CHRIS (OS, on phone)

Steve, are you crazy? Who's Bill Clay? What commercial? What the hell are you talking about?

By this time, the few AUDITIONERS who remain in the theatre are silently staring at Steve.

STEVE (into phone)

No, I'm not crazy. Look, forget the film, forget the commercial.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)

What film!? What commercial!?

STEVE (into phone)  
I'm in the theatre now. I've  
gotta go do this.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)  
Oh. Oh! Okay, I gotcha.

STEVE (into phone)  
Right. Ciao, bubeleh.

Steve hangs up his phone, but not before we hear Chris LAUGHING on the other end. Steve struggles to keep a straight face. He walks right up to Ellis with his hand extended, but before he can introduce himself, Ellis stops him.

ELLIS  
Gee, let me guess. You're here  
for the auditions. You're here  
very late for the auditions. And  
probably without an appointment,  
too.

STEVE  
Look, I -

ELLIS  
Save it. You can give me your  
particulars later. You look like  
you can act, so I'll give you a  
shot, at any rate.

Lauren flashes a disapproving look from up on stage as Ellis continues to take charge.

ELLIS (Cont.)  
Okay, up on stage, Mr...?

STEVE  
Oh, it's Steve Sheppard.  
Pleasure.

ELLIS  
We'll see. On stage.

Steve enthusiastically climbs up the front of the stage instead of going around to the side stairs. Lauren hides a CHUCKLE under her hand.

Ellis stands and walks to the foot of the stage. He surveys Lauren and the actors.

ELLIS

I'd like to try something a little different here. Hold on just a second.

He trots off to a side door, leaving the actors staring at each other with questioning looks. Lauren stares out at Eileen with a "what the hell is he doing?" look on her face.

The actors sit in chairs that are on the stage and wait. A moment later, Ellis walks back into the theatre with some papers in his hand.

LAUREN

What's this? Ellis?

Ellis walks back up to the foot of the stage and starts handing a sheet of paper to each of the actors.

ELLIS

Okay, this is just a little ... "special scene" for you folks to read. Ken, could you read Petruchio. Heidi, Bianca. Steve, why don't you read Lucentio for us? And, umm ... guess that leaves Lauren to read for Katharina.

He hands her a sheet of paper. As she looks over it, her eyes widen.

LAUREN

Ellis....

ELLIS

Katharina, Lauren. Top of the page. Whenever you're ready.

Lauren scowls and looks down at her sheet. She takes a seat among the actors, then launches into the scene.

LAUREN (as Katharina)

In truth, with kindness is your invitation received; but my will, as my heart, lies with my husband. 'Tis his duty to choose and mine to follow.

STEVE (as Lucentio)

Then in truth, Petruchio, how can thy answer be naught but an affirmation? For in thy breast doth the truth lie, and in thy breast lieth thy family: the fair Kate, her sister ... and myself.

KEN (as Petruchio)

Aye, but in truth, lie tests of will. And I question whether my wife be untrain'd therein: Now my gentle Kate, in sooth, art thou of a mind to go or to stay?

LAUREN (as Katharina)

My choice and my duty belong to thee, and my wisdom is yours as well, as with my mind and my heart: All to your keeping they lie.

HEIDI (as Bianca)

O! Hath the lady no longer a choice of her own? Kate, surely must there be more to thy mind as once there was?

Steve stands, walks to Lauren, and puts a hand on her shoulder. He's just caught up in the audition, but it still sends a visible chill up Lauren's spine.

Eileen glances over at Ellis and smiles. He notices this, politely smiles back, then turns back to watch the action on stage.

STEVE (as Lucentio)

'Tis no longer a wonder to mine eyes to see proper shame in the woman. No trifle neither, i'faith, what Petruchio hath gained, clearing tarnish off an otherwise ideal mould, making a proper courtier. But if upon prompt she does not give th'reply I've in mind, then my mind must turn to -

He turns his back to Lauren and faces Ken. She subtly looks him over from behind.

STEVE (as Lucentio, Cont.)  
 - Petruchio.

KEN (as Petruchio)  
 'Tis only fair I regard your  
 offer and you straight, lest you  
 suggest my desire is naught.

HEIDI  
 (breaking out of  
 character)  
 Okay, the men walk off here. You  
 want us to keep going with just  
 Kate and Bianca?

Lauren stands, walks over to Ellis, and thrusts her pages at  
 him.

ELLIS  
 I guess we've seen enough.

Ellis collects the remaining handouts from the actors.

EXT. COLUMBUS THEATRE - NIGHT

Steve stands outside the stage door of the theatre. He checks  
 his watch and looks impatiently at the door. The door opens,  
 and he perks up. Lauren and Eileen walk out together,  
 talking.

LAUREN  
 Good group of people came out.

EILEEN  
 Yeah, this should be a good cast  
 once it's all put together.

Steve walks over, big grin on his face.

STEVE  
 Hey, girls!

EILEEN  
 Hi. Steve, right?

STEVE  
 Steve Sheppard. But you were  
 really close.

EILEEN  
 Huh?

STEVE

Umm, Steve Sheppard. Not Steve Right.

(pause)

Never mind.

LAUREN

I've never known a guy who didn't want to be called "Mr. Right" before.

Lauren GIGGLES.

EILEEN

Okay, I gotta run.

She walks away as Steve and Lauren wave to her.

LAUREN

So, did you want something? Or were you just sticking around hoping you'd get a chance to use that lame joke?

STEVE

Sorry.

LAUREN

No, no ... it was cute, really.

(pause)

Nice job with that scene, by the way.

STEVE

Thanks. You too. Really hope I get to work with you on this.

LAUREN

Well, we'll see.

STEVE

Hey, what was that scene, anyway? Did you know about a "special scene" in *Shrew*?

Lauren LAUGHS nervously.

LAUREN

Not sure. Say, umm ... did you get your contact info squared away with Ellis? He said you weren't on the list.

The stage door bursts open, and Ellis comes barreling out, practically running over Lauren.

ELLIS

Whoa, sorry! Jeez, you're still here?

Steve pulls his cell phone out of his pocket.

STEVE

Actually, I gotta make a call. Thanks for the opportunity ... hope to see you guys again soon!

With that, he quickly starts dialing and walks away. Ellis and Lauren watch him disappear around a corner, then just stand for a moment.

Finally, Ellis speaks:

ELLIS

Hey, want to go grab a steak? I think we deserve one: That went really well.

LAUREN

Sure, I guess.

ELLIS

Aren't you hungry? I'm starved. Really worked up an appetite watching bad actors all day. Well, most of the day.

LAUREN

Yeah, I guess I'm hungry too.

ELLIS

Come on then. My treat. We can talk about the cast.

EXT. MANHATTAN STREET (MOVING) – NIGHT

Ellis and Lauren walk up 9th Avenue together.

LAUREN

I don't like what you did in there. I'm the director; I should have been in charge of those auditions.

ELLIS

So then why didn't you stop me? I thought everything went great, anyway. There was some real talent there.

LAUREN

Well, you weren't with the actors. I heard them talking.

ELLIS

About what?

LAUREN

About your "special scene."

ELLIS

Huh?

LAUREN

A few seemed curious to read a scene that's not in the play. In fact, I heard some saying that this isn't really *The Taming of the Shrew* we're putting on. You're the one who's so concerned about keeping this under wraps. Did you think professional actors wouldn't recognize a scene that isn't actually in the play?

ELLIS

What do they think it is, then?

LAUREN

I don't know, a re-imagination, or something. They haven't figured us out yet.

ELLIS

See? Then there's no problem.

LAUREN

But it was a stupid move to put that scene out there. You should've at least consulted with me first.

ELLIS

Only, what, five people, six tops, saw it. Besides, we're probably going to cast them, right?

LAUREN

Maybe, but that's not my point.

ELLIS

Then what is your point?

They stop at an intersection and turn to face each other.

LAUREN

This is my show, El. You provide the money and get asses into the seats. I put on the show. If I want them to read Act 2, scene 1, then they will. If I want them to read Act 19, scene 73, then they will.

Ellis opens his mouth to speak, but before he can, Lauren continues.

LAUREN (Cont.)

Don't say that it doesn't exist — we can make it exist if we want to, remember? I am in charge in there. Don't forget that, or you can find someone else to do this.

Lauren starts walking again, turning onto 46th Street. Ellis stands for a second, dumbfounded, then takes off after her.

ELLIS

(stammering)

Okay, okay, sure. I got that. I'm sorry. I was wrong. I don't mean to think of this as solely my show. We have a good cast. Or will, once we pick them, sign them, and tell them what we're doing. And it is "we." Don't worry.

LAUREN

All right.

They stop at a restaurant.

ELLIS

How's this for you?

Lauren looks at the menu in the window.

LAUREN

Looks fine.

Ellis opens the door for her.

ELLIS

Then let's go. Filet mignon awaits!

They enter the restaurant.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Ellis strides into an impressive, high-rent office building, fronted entirely in glass. He walks up to the BUILDING GUARD.

ELLIS

Hi, I have an appointment with Adam Winter, Skylight Publishing. Can I just go up, or...?

Meanwhile, Tina, the young woman Steve had breakfast with in the diner, exits a nearby elevator, and approaches Ellis before he can finish his thought.

TINA

Mr. Strahan? I'm Tina Summer, Mr. Winter's assistant. Come on up; you're right on time.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING (ELEVATOR) – DAY

Tina and Ellis stand side-by-side in an otherwise empty elevator.

It's a long, awkward ride to the top-floor office.

ELLIS

So. Miss Summer, Mr. Winter ... I guess you get a lot of flack for that.

TINA

I'm not sure what you mean.

ELLIS

Never mind.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING (CONFERENCE ROOM) – DAY

Ellis sits across from ADAM WINTER, a balding stub of a man, at a conference room table in the Skylight Publishing offices. Sunlight streams in from a large skylight centered over the table. There is a phone on the table, as well as a stack of papers that Adam is looking over.

Tina sits at Adam's side, jotting down notes. Ellis leans across to point at something on the papers.

ELLIS

No advertising for the book until opening night. I'm adamant about that.

ADAM

How are we supposed to market it?

ELLIS

You have to understand –

ADAM

(scoffs)

By word of mouth?

Ellis sits back in his chair, shaking his head.

ADAM (Cont.)

Well?

ELLIS

Look, how you market it after the show opens is up to you. We just can't have any leaks beforehand. Besides, don't you think this thing will market itself once people hear about it?

ADAM

You have to understand. We're ... nervous here.

Ellis starts to stand up.

ELLIS

I can go across the street to Random House.

ADAM

Sit back down, will you please? It's just that this isn't exactly a standard contract clause.

Ellis nods and sits back down. The phone BUZZES and Tina quickly grabs the receiver. Ellis leans back in his chair and stares up at the ceiling.

TINA

Conference room.

(pause)

Okay, great. Send him in.

She hangs up the phone. Adam gives her a questioning glance.

TINA

Dr. Northfield.

ELLIS

I'm sorry, who? Send who in?

ADAM

Dr. Julius Northfield.  
Shakespeare expert from NYU.

Ellis sits up straight, newly alert and obviously concerned.

ELLIS

I didn't. I....

Ellis takes a breath. Adam looks at him, puzzled.

ELLIS (Cont.)

Okay, Shakespeare expert. Why?

ADAM

I had Tina make him copies of those photostats you gave me. I was impressed, but I figured an educated opinion would be a good idea.

ELLIS

You had her what?

Ellis is quieted by a KNOCK on the door, which opens a second later. He straightens up in his seat as an older, distinguished-looking man, DR. NORTHFIELD, enters.

ADAM

Dr. Northfield! Thanks so much for looking over those documents for me.

DR. NORTHFIELD

Julius, Adam, please. And it was my pleasure. Fascinating stuff.

ADAM

That's a good sign. Julius, this is Ellis Strahan. He's the man I told you about, who found the play.

Dr. Northfield extends his hand to Ellis, who shakes it nervously.

ELLIS

Pleasure, sir.

DR. NORTHFIELD

Please, I haven't been knighted. Yet!

Dr. Northfield and Adam LAUGH ... Ellis just smiles weakly.

DR. NORTHFIELD (Cont.)

Fascinating find, Mr. Strahan. Might just put an end to the speculation about whether *A Shrew* is just a bad quarto of *The Shrew*.

Ellis stares blankly at him.

ELLIS

I'm not really an expert, Doctor.

Dr. Northfield CHUCKLES.

DR. NORTHFIELD

No, I guess you wouldn't know about that, then. *The Taming of A Shrew*, not *The Shrew*, is often thought to be a bad quarto edition of Shakespeare's *Shrew*. Or its source. Or a bad quarto of its source. Anyway, it contains a conclusion to the induction that's in both *Shrews*. Truth is, though, no one since Alexander Pope has taken it too seriously.

ADAM

What about Ellis's find? Is it serious?

DR. NORTHFIELD

It's seriously marketable, at any rate. But like I said, Adam, no definitive answer without seeing the original document.

ADAM

Right.

DR. NORTHFIELD

Right. But given the structure of the verse that I saw in the brief excerpt, the layout and publishing info on the cover page, and so forth ... well, I think you should go ahead and publish it, Adam.

ELLIS

I'm certainly glad to hear that.

DR. NORTHFIELD

Don't be too pleased with yourself. Starlight would make money on it even if it's fake, and that's the only reason I'd suggest publishing it. I'd like to see the original before I give it the Julius Northfield stamp of approval. And even that won't get you very far.

ELLIS

Opening night, Dr. Northfield. The original will be on display, and I'd be honored if you'd be my guest.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Steve walks into the store from the pouring rain, soaking wet and without an umbrella. He goes past the coffee shop located just inside the entrance and heads toward the back of the store, where they actually have books. He doesn't notice Ellis, who is at the counter ordering coffee.

On his way back, Steve stops an EMPLOYEE for directions.

STEVE

Umm, where would I find the Shakespeare section? You know, the plays and such?

EMPLOYEE

Theatre books, near the Children's section. Back that way.

He points Steve off in the direction he was originally heading. Steve nods and walks that way.

INT. BOOKSTORE (THEATRE SECTION) - DAY

Steve arrives in the theatre section and is surprised to see Lauren there. As he walks up, Lauren takes down a book and starts thumbing through it.

STEVE

Oh, hi there! It's ... Lauren, right?

Lauren looks up and recognizes Steve.

LAUREN

No, it's Lauren Marrus, not  
Lauren Right.

STEVE

Yeah, yeah. Funny running into  
you.

Lauren slowly closes the book she's been reading and holds it  
at her side.

LAUREN

So what brings you here?

STEVE

Well, I figured I'd bone up on my  
Shakespeare a bit, in case I get  
that chance to work with you.

LAUREN

Not a bad idea. You did great the  
other night.

STEVE

Thanks. I enjoyed reading  
opposite you. You were really  
good.

Steve starts to look through the shelves and sees a few  
different editions of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

LAUREN

(mumbling)

Actually, you do know I wasn't -

STEVE

Say, can you recommend an  
edition? You seem to know your  
stuff.

Lauren takes a closer look at the books on the shelf. She  
pulls one out and hands it to him.

LAUREN

Well, they're all more or less  
the same. You might do well with  
this one, though.

STEVE

Why's that?

LAUREN

Performance notes. Blocking suggestions and such. Shakespeare wasn't big on stage directions. Other than "exit, pursued by bear," that is.

Lauren LAUGHS, and Steve CHUCKLES along uncomfortably.

He notices a large book on the shelf entitled *The First Folio of Shakespeare*.

STEVE

Hmm. What about this one?

He takes the book down and nearly drops it.

STEVE (Cont.)

Damn, it's heavy.

LAUREN

That's reproductions of the original folios of the plays. Their first printing. Generally for scholars, not actors.

STEVE

Well, it seems pretty complete. Would that special scene we worked on at the audition be in here?

Steve starts thumbing through the big book. Lauren glances back in the direction of the coffee shop.

LAUREN

I guess. I mean, it's possible that it's just -

STEVE

Wait. Hold that thought; I have a better question. Do you like Thai food?

LAUREN

Do I what?

STEVE

Do you like Thai food?

Steve's cell phone RINGS.

LAUREN

That's an odd segue, but sure, I do. Why?

Steve puts the big book down on the floor as he takes his phone out of his pocket and checks the caller ID.

STEVE

Damn. Okay, now hold that thought. I have to take this, but I'll be back in a sec.

The phone RINGS again. Lauren nods. Steve puts the phone to his ear.

STEVE (into phone)

Yeah Chris?

Steve walks away. As he leaves, Lauren picks up the big Shakespeare book and re-shelves it, smiling after him.

INT. BOOKSTORE (CHILDREN'S BOOKS) – DAY

Steve walks into the Children's Books section to take his call. He dodges a few CHILDREN on his way.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)

What's up, kid?

STEVE (into phone)

Research.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)

Actually working for a change? Well then, let's make this quick. Tell me about the auditions.

STEVE (into phone)

Didn't turn up much. I tried out for a part.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)

Oh, really?

STEVE (into phone)  
It didn't look like I could get  
in otherwise. They weren't  
exactly open to the media.  
Besides, I did theatre for a bit  
in college.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)  
How's the script?

STEVE (into phone)  
We didn't really see it, I think.  
They did it as advertised –  
auditions for *The Taming of the*  
*Shrew*, not the sequel I heard  
about. The only odd thing was the  
director – that Strahan guy I  
told you about – pulled out some  
kind of "special scene."

CHRIS (OS, on phone)  
Special how?

STEVE (into phone)  
Aye, there's the rub. I don't  
really know. I'm guessing it's  
from the sequel, but I have to  
see for sure if it's in the  
original first. Maybe in some  
obscure version or something.  
That's why I'm doing the  
research.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)  
Okay, good. What are you finding?

STEVE (into phone)  
Nothing. I've been on the phone  
with you.

(pause)  
Strahan seems awfully smug, which  
might help in the long run.

Steve peeks around a display of Winnie-the-Pooh books and  
spies Lauren browsing the theatre section.

STEVE (into phone, Cont.)  
Oh, and I got to be friends with  
one of the actresses, in case I  
don't get a part. Doesn't hurt  
that she's really cute, of  
course.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)  
Sounds like a good move,  
Sheppard. Just keep me posted.  
And keep it in your pants.

STEVE (into phone)  
Of course, will do.

INT. BOOKSTORE (THEATRE SECTION) – DAY

Lauren has made a nice stack of theatre books and is adding  
one more to the pile. Steve reenters the section as she is  
struggling to lift them all.

STEVE  
Whoa, whoa. Need a hand there?

LAUREN  
Nah, I got it.

She manages to get the pile in her hands.

STEVE  
You sure?

LAUREN  
Yeah. Thanks, though. So, what  
were you going to say about Thai  
food?

STEVE  
I was thinking it'd be good for  
dinner tonight. How about it?

The stack of books in Lauren's hands teeters for a moment,  
and she obviously gets a bit off balance. Steve comes to the  
rescue, one hand on the books, the other on her back.

LAUREN  
Dinner tonight. Yeah, sure, why  
not. How does 7:30 sound?

INT. BOOKSTORE (COFFEE SHOP) - DAY

Ellis sits sipping coffee. *The New York Times* is on the table in front of him, but he is intently watching Lauren and Steve talking in the background.

He watches as Steve writes something on a scrap of paper, smiles, and leaves the store. Lauren walks back to the coffee shop, books in hand, and Ellis turns his attention to the paper.

She arrives and drops the heavy stack of books down on the table in front of him.

ELLIS

Guess that explains what took so long. Hi.

LAUREN

Hey. Sorry. I need these.

Ellis looks at the pile, stacked nearly up to eye level.

ELLIS

I hope they don't cost their weight in gold.

LAUREN

I didn't check the prices.

ELLIS

Okay, well, come on. I'm just about done here.

He drinks the last of his coffee, stands, and lifts up the stack of books.

ELLIS (Cont.)

You ready to go?

LAUREN

Actually, El ... I gotta run.

ELLIS

We're still on for dinner, right?

LAUREN

Can't tonight. In fact, I should probably take a few days to finish things up and get ready for the read-through. Alone, I mean. Without you.

ELLIS

Sounds fair, I guess. How much time do you need?

LAUREN

Well, we're agreed on the cast?

Ellis nods. Lauren checks her watch.

LAUREN (Cont.)

Okay, then let's meet in a week, before the read-through.

ELLIS

That long?

LAUREN

I just need my space to complete my prep work. Director stuff. It's nothing personal.

ELLIS

Okay. Sure.

Ellis looks at his shoes.

LAUREN

Don't worry, I'll let you buy me dinner next week.

ELLIS

Actually, I had something else in mind for then.

LAUREN

What?

ELLIS

How about I make dinner at my place? A working dinner. Provided we can keep our hands off each other, of course.

LAUREN  
Watch it, Romeo.

ELLIS  
Wrong play, Juliet.

She gives him a playful punch on the shoulder, then checks her watch again.

LAUREN (Cont.)  
Okay, I've really gotta run now.  
Give me a call to confirm for  
next week. Can you just drop the  
books off at the theatre?

ELLIS  
Wait, first you're making me buy  
them for you -

LAUREN  
Not you personally; It's for the  
play. Just mark it down in the  
expense account.

ELLIS  
Yeah, I got that part, but I had  
no idea our arrangement made me  
your personal delivery boy. You  
just better make it worth my  
trouble.

Lauren gives him a quick wink.

LAUREN  
Don't you worry about that.

ELLIS  
Fine. I guess I'll take care of  
everything, then.

LAUREN  
Good boy.

ELLIS  
Woof.

Lauren LAUGHS and pats him lightly on the head. She nearly melts Ellis with her smile, and then, like that, she walks away. Ellis's eyes remain glued to her, as he watches her exit the store.

Ellis sees her struggle with her umbrella as she gets drenched in the rain. All the while, a wistful smile plays across his face.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE STREET (MOVING) – NIGHT

Steve and Lauren proceed down the sidewalk, exuding an unmistakable "first date" awkwardness as they go.

STEVE

You know, I've walked by this place hundreds of times, and never even bothered to stop and look at the menu.

LAUREN

Really? It's the best Thai in the city. Bar none.

STEVE

I believe you; I just never heard of this place. I like things a little spicy, I know that much.

He flashes her a smile that makes her blink. She smiles back.

LAUREN

So ... the auditions. You did really well, you know?

STEVE

You think? I thought I did all right, thanks. You were great too.

LAUREN

Hmm?

STEVE

At the auditions. You were great reading with me, at the auditions. I hope you get the part.

LAUREN

Umm, you know I wasn't auditioning, right?

STEVE

You what? Then ... what...?

LAUREN  
I'm the director!

They exchange an openmouthed glance that quickly leads to LAUGHTER as they reach the entrance to the restaurant. Steve, still not quite believing, opens the door and ushers Lauren through.

STEVE  
(sarcastically)  
Yeah, sure. After you, Madame  
Director.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (ELLIS'S OFFICE) - NIGHT

Ellis sits at his desk, looking through a thick folder before circling a date on a calendar. He punches the speakerphone button on the phone, and starts DIALING. After a few RINGS, Lauren's voice replies.

LAUREN'S VOICE (OS, on phone)  
Hi, this is Lauren. I can't come  
to the phone, so give me a call  
on my cell, or leave a message  
after the beep. Wait for it!

BEEP.

ELLIS (into phone)  
Lauren, Ellis. Listen, pick up if  
you're there. I've got a quick  
question.  
(pause)  
Guess not. Okay, I just wanted to  
check with you about publicity  
arrangements, but I guess I can  
take care of that myself. I ...  
umm, I'm looking forward to  
dinner next week. Miss you. See  
you then.

Ellis taps a button to hang up the phone, then hangs his head in his hand.

ELLIS  
"Miss you?" Jesus, Ellis....

INT. THAI RESTAURANT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Steve and Lauren are nearly finished with their meal. They're obviously more relaxed: The date is going well and the conversation is sprinkled with intermittent LAUGHTER.

STEVE

You have got to be kidding me!

LAUREN

You're serious?

STEVE

No, see: You can't be telling me I got the part, because you're not the director. Ellis Strahan's the director, isn't he? You just can't be. I never would've asked out the director after an audition!

Lauren nods through a smile, but Steve has become serious.

STEVE (Cont.)

I feel like such an ass, really.

LAUREN

Don't. You didn't know.

STEVE

Yeah, but I should have figured it out. If I'd known, I wouldn't have asked you out.

LAUREN

That would've been too bad.

STEVE

Yeah, it would've. But, still ... I got the part? I'm Lucentio?

LAUREN

Yep, and you would've gotten it if you hadn't asked me out, too.

She winks at him. Steve smiles in response.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (ELLIS'S OFFICE) - NIGHT

Ellis remains behind the desk, staring at the phone, with a closed briefcase on his lap.

ELLIS

Lauren, Ellis. When I said I missed you before, I just want you to know I meant it with respect to the work we need to get done. Strictly professional.

The phone suddenly RINGS, and Ellis nearly falls out of his chair. The briefcase THUDS to the ground as he picks up the phone.

ELLIS (into phone)

Hello!

(pause)

No, sorry, no show times. This is a "theatre" theatre, not a movie theatre.

He hangs up the phone, then stands and stares at it for a minute. Finally, he shakes his head, picks up his briefcase, and walks to the door. Stopping at the door, he looks back again before heading out.

ELLIS

Better off not digging a deeper hole.

With that, he shuts the lights in the office and walks out.

EXT. LAUREN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Steve and Lauren arrive back at her apartment from the restaurant. There's the grandmother of all awkward silences between them. When they reach her doorstep, they stop, and Lauren finally breaks the silence.

LAUREN

Thanks for dinner. It was great.

STEVE

You're welcome. Thanks for the company.

LAUREN

My pleasure.

Another silence. Steve looks confused.

LAUREN

Something wrong?

STEVE

I think I'm supposed to kiss you.

Lauren looks down and smiles.

LAUREN

Yeah, I think you are.

He steps forward and puts his hand on her cheek. They smile at each other and close their eyes. Finally, they KISS.

Afterwards, they both step back and smile again at each other. They close their eyes once more, embrace, and kiss again. Lauren pulls away from Steve just before things get too passionate.

LAUREN

Thanks again.

STEVE

No problem. I guess I'll ... talk to you tomorrow.

LAUREN

Sounds good. We should have the rehearsal schedule ready by the afternoon.

STEVE

Well, so ... good night, I guess.

LAUREN

'Night.

She goes inside. Steve watches her through the window as she walks upstairs. He stands there a minute, smiling after her, and then turns to walk away.

INT. LAUREN'S APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

Lauren walks in, flicks on a light, throws her keys on a table, and closes and bolts her front door. One step into the apartment, she notices her answering machine flashing. She walks over and hits "play," prompting a BEEP from the machine.

ELLIS (on machine)  
 Lauren, Ellis. Listen, pick up if  
 you're there. I've got a quick  
 question.

(pause)

Guess not. Okay, I just wanted to  
 check with you about publicity  
 arrangements, but I guess I can  
 take care of that myself. I ...  
 umm, I'm looking forward to  
 dinner next week. Miss you. See  
 you then.

She SIGHS and walks over to the phone. She picks up the  
 handset and looks down at the number pad.

LAUREN  
 Miss you, too.

She shakes her head and pauses. After a moment, she hangs up  
 the phone without dialing.

LAUREN  
 Frailty, thy name is Lauren!

Turning off the light, she walks off into her bedroom.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN (MOVING) – DAY

As Steve rides a half-empty subway car, an OLD MAN sits down  
 next to him and starts flipping through a newspaper. Halfway  
 through, he stops, looks up at Steve, frowns, and looks back  
 at the paper.

STEVE  
 Yeah, that's me.

OLD MAN  
 I can see that.

At the next station, the old man gets off, leaving the paper  
 behind. Steve picks it up and flicks through it. Tina enters  
 the train and sits down next to Steve.

TINA  
 Can't stop reading your own  
 stories, eh?

Steve looks over at her.

STEVE

Tina. Hi. Didn't think you took  
this train anymore.

TINA

How's it going?

STEVE

It's going to rehearsal,  
actually. No time to talk.

Steve stands up and drops the newspaper on his seat. He gets ready for the train to stop.

TINA

Oh, you got the story? About that  
*Taming of the Shrew* sequel?

STEVE

Not only that, but I think I got  
a part in it. Gotta run.

She stands up to join him. The train SQUEALS to a stop.

TINA

Got time for a quick drink?

Steve smiles at her and heads to the open doors.

STEVE

Nope. Sorry. Bye.

He darts off the train. Tina SIGHS and sits back down.

INT. ELLIS'S APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - LATE AFTERNOON

Ellis is slaving away in the kitchen, OS, while shouting into the living room to Lauren. Lauren sits on the couch, reviewing the director's script of *The Taming of the Shrew, Part 2*. She makes notes on the script and in a notepad.

ELLIS (OS)

Say, why don't you make yourself  
useful and pick a bottle of red  
wine off the rack on the  
sideboard.

Lauren gets up from the table and closes the manuscript, sticking her pen at the page she was last working on.

LAUREN

Yes, sir.

INT. ELLIS'S APARTMENT (DINING ROOM) – LATE AFTERNOON

Lauren walks into the attached dining room. The table is set for two, and a candle burns in the center. Lauren pauses to take this in before heading to the sideboard.

LAUREN (yelling to Ellis)

Cabernet or Shiraz?

Ellis pokes his head out of the kitchen for a quick quip:

ELLIS

Which one will get you drunk and  
naked quicker?

Lauren inspects the labels. She arbitrarily picks the Shiraz and stares at the bottle.

LAUREN

(muttering to  
herself)

Probably this one.

Ellis doesn't hear her.

She puts the bottle of Shiraz back and brings the Cabernet into the living room.

LAUREN (to Ellis)

Sorry, it's not that easy  
anymore.

INT. ELLIS'S APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) – LATE AFTERNOON

Lauren returns to the couch, putting the wine bottle on the coffee table and retrieving her copy of *Shrew 2*. She goes back to work as Ellis calls in from the kitchen.

ELLIS (OS)

Who was it that said that these  
are the best days of our life? I  
disagree; grad school was.

Lauren looks up from the script, stung by what he just said.

LAUREN

Yeah, I guess.

Ellis enters from the kitchen, with a kitchen towel slung over his shoulder. He takes advantage of Lauren's momentary distractedness to grab the script from her and sit next to her on the couch.

ELLIS

Okay, I've got a couple of minutes. Let's see what you're doing to our baby.

He reads over some of her notes on the script.

ELLIS

Are you sure this blocking will work before the soliloquy?

LAUREN

Well, Bianca has to be hiding on stage, otherwise things won't make any sense. She needs to know about Petruchio's plans so she can undermine them during her soliloquy.

She points at her notepad on the coffee table. Ellis reaches to slide the notepad over so he can see it better, and their hands touch. Ellis not-too-subtly brushes his fingers against the back of her hand.

ELLIS

I'm glad we're together again. Working on this, I mean.

LAUREN

So am I.

He keeps caressing her hand. She's half letting him, half frozen in place.

ELLIS

Ten years is a long time....

LAUREN

True.

She slowly pulls her hand away. Ellis hands the script back to her and stands.

ELLIS

I, umm ... I'd better go check on  
the food.

He returns to the kitchen, and Lauren just stares into space.

ELLIS (OS)

I think we're set.

Ellis backs through the swinging door, big bowl of steaming pasta in one hand, basket of bread in the other. He gestures toward the dining room.

ELLIS

C'mon. We can eat in there,  
finish going over the script  
before the read-through tonight.  
There's more room on the big  
table.

LAUREN

Right. More room.

EXT. MANHATTAN (MOVING) - EVENING

Steve, with a newspaper under his arm, briskly darts around some early evening shoppers. He checks the time on his cell phone as he rounds a corner. He looks around for a moment, and then enters a pizzeria.

INT. ELLIS'S APARTMENT (DINING ROOM) - EVENING

Ellis and Lauren finish up the meal, which looks like it was quite elaborate.

ELLIS

So?

LAUREN

Very good. You've improved in the  
kitchen over the last ten years.  
Who should I thank?

ELLIS

That's not the only room I've  
gotten better in.

She shoots him a pointed look.

LAUREN

Well, I would like to speak on behalf of all the single women in New York when I say "thank God" to that.

ELLIS

Anyway, you can thank Gemelli's for dinner.

LAUREN

Who?

ELLIS

Gemelli's. On Restaurant Row. Picked it up this afternoon, before you got here. Heat it up, put it in my own dishes, and *voilà!*

He leans back, with a sense of accomplishment in his eyes, and takes a sip of wine.

LAUREN

*Voilà.*

(pause)

Why did you bother? Especially since you just told me, anyway?

ELLIS

Just wanted to prove to you that it could be done.

LAUREN

What could be done?

ELLIS

Fooling all of the people all of the time.

Lauren smiles.

LAUREN

And you just had to prove that.

ELLIS

Of course. Anyway, you didn't do too bad picking out the wine.

LAUREN

But I'm not drunk and naked.

ELLIS

Yet.

LAUREN

Keep trying.

She finishes her glass in one big swig, holds out her glass for Ellis to refill.

ELLIS

What happened to the "two pints  
and I'm drunk - whee!"  
lightweight from Ohio I met in  
London?

LAUREN

She grew up.

Ellis cocks an eyebrow at her as he refills her glass.

ELLIS

So I see.

INT. PIZZERIA - EVENING

Steve sits alone at a booth, eating a slice of pizza. A copy of *The New York Times* is open in front of him. He turns a page and takes a sip of his Coke, when a headline below the fold catches his eye. He puts down his pizza and picks up the section to get a closer look.

CU (NEWSPAPER HEADLINE): Copying The Master: Dietrich's drawings capture Da Vinci's spirit.

He begins reading the article with great interest. After a moment, he pulls his cell phone out of his pocket, dials, and frowns as the call goes to voicemail. He takes a quick bite of the pizza while waiting for the message, never taking his eyes off the article.

STEVE

Chris, it's Steve. I just had a  
thought about that *Shrew* scene.  
Call me.

INT. ELLIS' APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - EVENING

Ellis and Lauren are making a final check on the script and the notes she's been taking. They are sitting rather close on the couch together, but their wine glasses are even closer on the coffee table.

ELLIS  
Something wrong?

LAUREN  
No.

He leans across her to pick up his wineglass and take a sip. Putting it back down, he slides over, practically touching her.

ELLIS  
What is it, then?

Ellis puts his hand on her shoulder. She fidgets and looks down at the table.

LAUREN  
This isn't a good idea.

ELLIS  
What isn't? The play?

Ellis begins gently massaging her neck and shoulders. Lauren stretches her neck, enjoying it.

LAUREN  
No, not the play.

ELLIS  
Good, because it's a little late  
to turn back.

Lauren doesn't reply. Ellis takes this as an invitation to move closer to her, and he does. Lauren looks down as Ellis moves in for a kiss. Before he can kiss her, she turns away and shrugs his hand off of her.

LAUREN

Look, Ellis, just because we're working together side-by-side, it doesn't mean we're "together" again. We'll never forget that year in London, but ... we've both changed since then. We don't know each other well enough anymore to pick up where we left off. And right now, we need to focus on this play.

ELLIS

I understand that. What I don't understand is why we can't get ... reacquainted with each other at the same time.

Lauren slides to one side of the couch.

LAUREN

It's just not that easy, Ellis! You lost that right in London.

ELLIS

This isn't London.

LAUREN

No, it's not.

She stands up and heads for the coat closet. She takes her coat out and puts it on.

ELLIS

Where are you going? We still have work to do!

Lauren grabs the script and notebook from the table while he's still talking.

LAUREN

I'm trying to tell you, I'm not interested in that kind of "work" with you right now. I'm going to the theatre.

ELLIS

You can't do this without me!

Lauren finishes the wine in her glass, places it back on the table, and calmly walks to the door. Ellis jumps up and follows.

LAUREN

Watch me.

She walks out, leaving Ellis holding the door. He pauses for a second, then follows her out and SLAMS the door behind him.

EXT. ELLIS'S APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

Lauren storms out the front door and walks down the street.

A moment later, Ellis comes out and runs after Lauren.

ELLIS

Lauren! Wait!

He's a half-block behind her. She stops and turns around. He walks over to her.

LAUREN

What is it?

ELLIS

I'm sorry. We need to focus on the play. That's what I want you for, you know that.

LAUREN

And be professionals about it?

Ellis nods, glumly, and soon is smiling.

ELLIS

If you can keep your hands off me.

Lauren gives him a quick hug.

LAUREN

I'll do my best.

Not missing a beat, she turns and starts walking away again.

ELLIS

I'm your boss, don't forget. I can fire you at any time!

Lauren keeps walking and doesn't turn around.

LAUREN

Yeah, and I can quit at any time,  
too. Then you'd be screwed.

Ellis starts to say something else but thinks better of it.

ELLIS

(quietly)

She's right. I would be screwed.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (STAGE AREA) – NIGHT

Ken (cast as Petruchio), Heidi (Katharina), Steve (Lucentio),  
and the rest of the ACTORS are milling around the stage,  
getting acquainted as Lauren and Eileen enter from backstage.

Lauren CLAPS HER HANDS to get everyone's attention.

LAUREN

People, please. Come on stage and  
have a seat. There'll be plenty  
of time to chat over the next few  
months.

Steve finds a chair and sits down, with Ken to his right. A  
gruff-looking man with a crew-cut, DENNIS (Hortensio), sits  
on Steve's left. On the other side of Ken are Heidi and  
MARISA (Bianca), a college-aged brunette with thick curls.

LAUREN

Everyone set?

All of the actors, about two dozen total, nod. Two or three  
have copies of the original *Taming of the Shrew* sitting on  
their laps. Others, including Steve, have pens in hand.

LAUREN

I see some of you brought along  
copies of *Taming of the Shrew*.  
Unfortunately, I'm afraid that's  
not the play we're putting on.

A few actors start MURMURING to each other. Steve leans  
forward in his chair.

LAUREN (Cont.)

Your lines are on the way. Ellis  
Strahan – the producer – is  
getting copies of them and should  
be here shortly.

HEIDI

So, if we're not doing *Taming of the Shrew*, then what play are we doing?

LAUREN

*The Taming of the Shrew, Part 2.*

HEIDI

There's a part 2?

The MURMURING of actors grows louder, as AD-LIBBED DIALOGUE drowns out Lauren. Steve jots something down.

LAUREN

It's getting its world premiere here at the Columbus. Congratulations, you're going to make —

Her speech is overwhelmed by the CLAMOR. She looks at Eileen, who shrugs.

EILEEN

Just give them a minute.

Lauren nods and sits in an empty chair on stage. After a moment, she CLAPS HER HANDS again, trying to get everyone's attention. No one pays her any heed, continuing to CHATTER away.

Eventually the door opens, and Ellis enters victoriously, with a stack of red paper in his hands. He marches around to the side stairs and up onto the stage. The crowd quiets down.

ELLIS

Good evening; sorry I'm late. (to Lauren) What'd I miss?

LAUREN

Nothing. I was just starting to explain what we're really —

Ellis shushes her with a held-up finger. Lauren looks shocked — too shocked to stop him.

ELLIS

Good, good. Allow me. Now that everyone's signed their contracts – and confidentiality clauses – Kate can be let out of the bag. I hold here in my hands the cue sheets for the very first performance of *The Taming of the Shrew, Part 2*, by William Shakespeare.

He walks to each of the actors and hands out stapled pages of the script to them. Each handout is labeled for an individual part: Katharina, Petruchio, Lucentio, etc. The actors get the pages for their individual character and start to look through them.

MARISA

Wait. I only have my lines.

DENNIS

Yeah, me too.

LAUREN

I know, guys. We're doing this as it would've been done four hundred years ago.

STEVE

How are we supposed to learn this?

ELLIS

Each actor has only his own lines and cues. It's not that difficult.

LAUREN

That's what rehearsals are for. You can see, you get the last few words of the previous line in there to cue you. You just have to pay attention and listen for it so you know when to come in.

Ellis steps up, as if he's in charge.

ELLIS

Folks, we have plenty of time to get this show on the road. If actors managed to do it this way four hundred years ago, I'm sure you can manage today. We're going to do everything we can to -

Lauren stands up and interrupts him.

LAUREN

Yes, you're in good hands here. We just need to concentrate a bit harder. We're aiming to make this presentation as authentic as possible, as befits the debut of a play by the Bard.

Ken holds up his copy.

KEN

So Shakespeare really wrote this?

ELLIS

Yes.

KEN

Wow.

ELLIS

Let me explain this, so we don't keep getting bogged down with questions. The original *Taming of the Shrew* began with an induction, which for four hundred years seemed like an unclosed bookend. It introduced the main play to the audience as being presented to Christopher Sly, and ... well, that was basically it. So, it's no big surprise that Shakespeare closed that bookend in a play that was hiding all these years. And I discovered the quarto of that play about 12 years ago.

(pause)

That should answer any questions you may have about the play. Now ... shall we get started?

The actors all nod, excitedly.

FADE TO:

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (STAGE AREA) – NIGHT

The read-through has begun. The actors have turned their chairs into a half-circle facing Lauren. Eileen stands on the outside of the semi-circle, walking from actor to actor, whispering comments to them as needed. Ellis sits in the front row of the audience.

The action fades in and out as we see Lauren direct bits of the read-through. During the montage, the excitement level of the actors increases, and Lauren gets more and more animated (getting up out of her seat, walking around to the actors, and so forth), as they get deeper into the story of Petruchio, Katharina, Lucentio, and Bianca, set a year after the original *The Taming of the Shrew*.

HEIDI (as Katharina)

As your wife; I shall be of your mind; and as how you shall have me. We shall be as one in body, in heart, in life.

KEN (as Petruchio)

Then wherefore art I embattled by your incessant questioning?

HEIDI (as Katharina)

My questions are naught but statements of facts, my love: Thy servants are leaving; our fortune passes as they do; we cannot long afford this life.

FADE TO:

KEN (as Petruchio)

'Tis only fair I regard your offer, and you, straight, lest you suggest my desire is naught.

LAUREN

Okay, Lucentio and Petruchio exit, leaving Kate and Bianca behind.

MARISA (as Bianca)  
 Tell me, my sister, what ails  
 thee?

HEIDI (as Katharina)  
 My heart and mind are at war,  
 Bianca, and I fear the victor can  
 be naught save Petruchio.

FADE TO:

STEVE (as Lucentio)  
 The ballot must be open; all must  
 have th'opportunity to be victor.

KEN (as Petruchio)  
 Aye, in outward appearance it  
 shall be so; but inwardly you  
 will make my honor assured and  
 thy argosies mine own. I shall  
 win, and my wife and I shall live  
 as rich as thee.

STEVE (as Lucentio)  
 A most excellent plan, i'faith,  
 my friend! We shall make it come  
 to light to-morrow.

FADE TO:

Lauren stops the actors in the read-through. She leans on the back of her chair with one hand, and wipes sweat off her brow with the other.

LAUREN  
 Okay, that brings us to the end  
 of act three. Let's take a break.  
 Fifteen minutes.

EXT. COLUMBUS THEATRE – NIGHT

Steve joins a group of actors by the stage door, smoking cigarettes. Steve is not smoking; he's just there to listen.

KEN  
 I'm really impressed with the  
 script so far.

HEIDI

Yeah, me too. Shakespeare was just amazing.

KEN

I'm dying to see how it ends. You think they'll get away with it?

Heidi and the other actors LAUGH. Steve doesn't react.

FADE TO:

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (STAGE AREA) – NIGHT

As the read-through continues, a portly middle-aged man, ROGER, reads for BAPTISTA.

ROGER (as Baptista)

'Tis true that fair is fair, and foul is foul; The name was spoken both true and aloud. Thy complaint shall not be followed through; nor will Lucentio's argosies pass to you.

FADE TO:

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (STAGE AREA) – NIGHT

The read-through has ended. Lauren has collapsed back into her chair in front of the semicircle of actors. Ellis sits in the front row of the audience with a large grin on his face.

The actors are all APPLAUDING.

LAUREN

Great job, everyone.

Ellis walks around to the side stairs to get up on stage and starts shaking hands with the actors.

ELLIS

(to various actors)  
Great job, thank you. We're going to kill them, huh? Opening night can't come soon enough!

LAUREN

(to Ellis)  
We still have a long way to go.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE - NIGHT

Lauren passes by on her way to the backstage offices. Steve follows, calling after her.

STEVE

Hey, Lauren. Do you have a minute?

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (BACKSTAGE) - NIGHT

Lauren stops in a hallway on the way to the theatre offices. She stops in front of a door marked DIRECTOR.

LAUREN

Sure. What's up?

STEVE

It's the script.

He holds out his cue sheets.

LAUREN

What about it?

STEVE

Who wrote it?

LAUREN

Shakespeare did.

STEVE

Who, Gus Shakespeare?

Lauren just looks at him.

STEVE (Cont.)

William Shakespeare. Really.

He studies her face closely. She notices this, and smiles.

LAUREN

Yes, of course. Is that why you're here, or did you want something else, Steve?

STEVE

I'm not sure about it.

LAUREN

Are you an expert in Shakespeare?

No reply.

LAUREN (Cont.)

Do you have a PhD in  
Shakespearean Studies?

STEVE

Umm, no.

LAUREN

Well, I do. Dr. Lauren Marrus,  
PhD in Shakespearean Studies, *cum*  
*laude*, University of Enfield,  
1991.

She smiles and thrusts her hand out to Steve.

LAUREN (Cont.)

Pleasure to meet you.

He shakes her hand, but looks slightly stunned and confused.

STEVE

So you say the script is legit?

LAUREN

Look, I wouldn't direct it if I  
didn't think so.

She stares at him. He stares back, but quickly looks down at his lines. He thumbs through the pages and shakes his head slowly.

STEVE

If you say so....

LAUREN

Well, it's hard to get a read on the thing when it's only one character's lines you're looking at, and you've only had one full read-through to try to establish context. Look, did you expect us to have the original quarto on hand so we could all huddle around and read together? Ellis keeps that in a safe place.

STEVE

I bet. And you've seen it?

LAUREN

Of course. Who do you think wrote out the cue sheets? The quarto is the full play, not each character's lines.

They stop talking for a moment and look at each other. The attraction between them is obvious.

STEVE

So, tell me, did it just show up one day? The last time I checked, previously unknown Shakespeare scripts don't grow on trees. This one had to come from somewhere.

LAUREN

Right, Ellis found it in London when we were both grad students at Enfield. He held on to it until he could get it produced on his own terms.

STEVE

He just, what? Found it one day?

LAUREN

More or less. The Globe was being excavated in Southwark, near my apartment, and.... Really, Steve, this is all history.

STEVE

So you've known about it for a dozen years now?

LAUREN

No, I ... just since last fall. That's another story, but it's not important, nor should it affect how you should play your role.

STEVE

Uh-huh.

He doesn't trust her. Behind them, we see Ellis walk by, heading toward his office. He stops for a moment and listens. Steve doesn't see Ellis. Lauren does, but doesn't indicate to Steve - or Ellis - that she has noticed.

LAUREN

Anyway, Steve, I had a great time with you the other night. I figured you stopped me to ask me out again.

STEVE

I had a great time, too.

Ellis walks out of sight. We hear his office door CLOSE.

LAUREN

So maybe we should do it again.

STEVE

Good idea. I can call you tomorrow, okay?

She gives him a big smile.

LAUREN

I'll be waiting.

Lauren walks into her office and closes the door behind her. Steve pulls his notebook out of his pocket, jots a few things down, and walks away.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (LAUREN'S OFFICE) – NIGHT

Ellis opens the door and barges into the office.

ELLIS

Let me get this straight-

LAUREN

Thanks for knocking.

ELLIS

-You're dating one of the actors?

LAUREN

Yeah, I am, sort of. He didn't know I was directing when we first went out. He thought you were in charge.

She SNORTS a little laugh. Ellis is not amused.

ELLIS

Come on, Lauren. We have to be careful here.

LAUREN

You're worried about Steve? He's just an actor.

ELLIS

Can you trust him?

LAUREN

I trusted him enough to have dinner with him Saturday night, right?

ELLIS

I suppose. Just proceed with caution. Being friendly with a cast member is one thing, but dating him is another.

LAUREN

And you're the expert on who I should and should not date?

ELLIS

No. Only I thought that we....

He trails off, hesitates, then takes a tentative step toward her. Lauren doesn't move.

LAUREN

Thought what?

Another step over to her. They stare each other in the eye.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (LOBBY) - NIGHT

Steve reenters the theatre from the street. All of the other actors have left, and the stage area is deserted except for him. He starts to head backstage, but stops when he hears Lauren and Ellis in the b.g.

LAUREN (OS)

Ellis, I can't. We can't. Not now. We've been over this.

ELLIS (OS)

I know that. Just ... keep your options open, okay?

LAUREN (OS)

There's just too much going on right now. I'm so involved with this, that I can't.... This all makes me too nervous.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (LAUREN'S OFFICE) - NIGHT

Ellis and Lauren stand face-to-face. His hand is on her shoulder.

ELLIS

Just stay calm, and let things happen.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (BACKSTAGE) - NIGHT

Steve heads back toward Lauren's office.

LAUREN (OS)

I'm okay; I know this will work out.

ELLIS (OS)

We just have to trust in each other. Which is the only reason I came to you about this ... Steve guy.

Steve perks up. He thinks better of interrupting them and stops outside the office door, out of view.

LAUREN (OS)

Good. Besides, if this is all about trust, I have just as much reason for concern as you. If not more.

ELLIS (OS)

Relax, we'll pull this off. You can count on me.

Steve quickly whips his notepad from his coat pocket. We see him write down what Lauren and Ellis just said, and then think for a moment. Above the quotes, he writes "TAMING SHREW SEQUEL - FAKE? PROOF?" before tucking the notebook back away.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (LAUREN'S OFFICE) - NIGHT

Ellis has Lauren in a sympathetic hug.

ELLIS

Don't worry. We're going to get through this just fine.

Suddenly, there's a KNOCK on the door. Steve sticks his head in.

STEVE

Oh, sorry. Am I, uh ... interrupting something?

Lauren quickly pulls out of the hug and turns away to collect herself.

ELLIS

No, not at all. I'm leaving. (to Lauren) Watch yourself.

Ellis leaves, bumping his shoulder into Steve on his way out of the office.

Steve steps into the office and walks over to Lauren. He gently shuts the door behind him.

STEVE

Are you all right?

LAUREN

Yeah. Just ... stuff from the London days. It's okay now.

STEVE

(warily)  
If you say so.

LAUREN

What brought you back?

STEVE

Oh, I couldn't wait till tomorrow, so I was wondering ... do you like Thai food?

She LAUGHS. He smiles at her.

LAUREN

I do. But, I think next time we should have Mexican. And maybe a movie afterwards. Like a real date.

STEVE

Sounds good to me. When did you have in mind?

LAUREN

I'm not sure. Let me check with Ellis. Call me tomorrow, okay?

Steve nods and makes his way to the door.

STEVE

Okay. I'll call you in the morning.

Lauren gives him a quick kiss on the cheek before he leaves.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (BACKSTAGE) - NIGHT

Lauren exits her office, shuts the door, and locks it up. She starts heading toward the stage area, but sees light coming from beneath Ellis's door. She walks over and softly KNOCKS on the door.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (ELLIS'S OFFICE) - NIGHT

Ellis sits at his desk, going through some papers printed out from a spreadsheet. He looks up when he hears the knock on the door.

ELLIS

Yeah, come on in.

He sighs, and puts the papers down in a neat pile on the desk. Lauren enters the office and stands in the doorway.

LAUREN

Don't stay here too late, okay?

Ellis rubs his eyes.

ELLIS

I won't. You heading home now?

Lauren nods, and rubs the back of her neck with her hand.

LAUREN

Yeah, I need a hot shower and a warm bed in the worst way.

ELLIS

Ooh, now we're talking.

LAUREN  
Are you volunteering for duty,  
Private Strahan?

ELLIS  
Why? Do you need help?

LAUREN  
Maybe.

She smiles, coyly, at him. She looks down at the papers on his desk.

LAUREN  
How are the numbers looking?

ELLIS  
Better all the time.

LAUREN  
Good.

ELLIS  
Yeah. And I have the publishing  
proposal from Skylight for the  
quarto here.

He points at another document neatly stacked on the desk. She takes a quick glance at it and sees some big numbers on it.

LAUREN  
Great. (a beat) Look, El, I feel  
bad about running out on you  
after dinner. Let me buy you a  
drink. You can ... fill me in.

Ellis looks at her, trying to read her face, whether there's more to what she's saying than simply the words. He can't tell.

ELLIS  
Okay.

INT. HARVEY'S BAR - NIGHT

Ellis and Lauren sit on stools at the corner of the bar, drinks in front of them. They're both LAUGHING and having a good time. It's quite late and there are just a few other PEOPLE in the bar.

ELLIS

Yes, yes! I remember him! What was it he always used to say?

ELLIS and LAUREN

(bad English accent)

"Say what you wish, but back up what you say."

They both LAUGH. As the laughter ends, it becomes quiet between them. Ellis notices a few loose strands of her hair hanging down on her face. He reaches out and gently pushes them behind her ear. Lauren closes her eyes for a moment as he does so.

ELLIS

I shouldn't have waited 12 years to call you again, I've really missed you. You're one of a kind.

Lauren blushes, and looks down. Ellis's fingers brush her cheeks as she moves her head.

LAUREN

Thanks. You're pretty special yourself.

ELLIS

I'm ... sorry about earlier. That stuff with Steve. You're right; It's none of my business.

LAUREN

Oh, it's no big deal. It's not like he's my boyfriend or anything.

ELLIS

Not yet.

Lauren looks him in the eye, causing Ellis to look away.

BARTENDER

Last call, people! You don't have to go home, but you can't stay here!

LAUREN

Oh, god ... did he just say what I think he said?

ELLIS

I think so. I haven't heard that since ... what was that place on Charing Cross? With the Scottish bartender? Damn, I can't remember the name.

LAUREN

Jack's?

ELLIS

Yeah, that's it. I loved that place. God, I miss London.

LAUREN

I do, too, sometimes.

ELLIS

Maybe we can take *Taming 2* on tour. First New York, then London.

They both LAUGH. Lauren starts to rise from her stool.

LAUREN

Yeah, sure. And then, my original plays. We done here?

Ellis nods, and gets up. Lauren puts a \$20 bill on the bar as they leave.

EXT. HARVEY'S BAR - NIGHT

Lauren and Ellis exit, and start walking together.

ELLIS

I'm glad we cleared things up. It's nice to be able to just talk without mentioning the Shrew.

LAUREN

Or me being the Shrew.

ELLIS

Oh, I'll tame you yet.

Lauren stops, turns to him, and looks into his eyes.

LAUREN

Will you now?

Ellis gazes back and smiles.

ELLIS

If you let me.

Lauren looks down as Ellis leans in for a kiss. As their eyes close, Ellis gets second thoughts and pulls back. An awkward silence falls between them.

LAUREN

Well, I, umm ... I should get going. I have that date with the shower to keep.

ELLIS

Let me hail you a cab.

LAUREN

Some things never change.

ELLIS

Some things never should.

Ellis smiles and steps out onto the sidewalk. He makes a LOUD WHISTLE, and waves his arm.

A taxi comes up to the curb next to them. Ellis walks over to it and opens the back door.

ELLIS

Have a good night. Thanks for the drink.

LAUREN

Thanks for the good company.

ELLIS

No problem.

LAUREN

Good night.

She closes the door, and waves at Ellis. We see her turn to the TAXI DRIVER and tell him her address. As the taxi drives off, Lauren presses her lips against the window a la Marilyn Monroe. Ellis remains on the sidewalk, smiling and shaking his head, as he watches the taxi drive away.

EXT. STEVE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Steve approaches his building with a soda cup in one hand and a take-out bag in the other. Just as he's fishing in his pocket for his keys, his cell phone RINGS. He stops at the door, checks the caller ID on the phone, and rolls his eyes.

STEVE (into phone)  
 Yeah, Tina.... No, I already  
 grabbed lunch. At Nick's. I'm on  
 my way home to watch the game.  
 (pause)  
 Listen- No, I understand.... I  
 appreciate what you gave me, I  
 do-

As he talks, he unlocks the door to his building.

STEVE (into phone)  
 No, I wasn't blowing you off. I  
 told you, I had rehearsal.... I  
 would, but the truth is, I'm ...  
 I'm sort of seeing someone else.  
 Someone in the show.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Steve lives in a comfortably sized studio apartment. There's a semi-partitioned kitchen, a large living room with a pull-out sofa, and a separate bathroom. As we hear Steve still on his cell phone in the hallway, the phone in his apartment begins to RING.

STEVE (OS, into phone)  
 I can't do this now; my land  
 line's ringing.... Maybe; we'll  
 see. I have to go now. Goodbye.

Steve walks in as the apartment phone continues RINGING away. He puts his lunch on a table and answers the call.

STEVE (into phone)  
 Yeah, this is Steve.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)  
 Hey, kid. Just checking to see  
 how my story's coming.

Steve sits down on his sofa, grabs the remote control, and turns on his TV. He switches the channel to the Knicks game.

STEVE (into phone)  
 Still in the information-  
 gathering stage, Chris. I went  
 out with that actress, who  
 actually turned out to be the  
 director.

Steve unpacks a sandwich from the bag and takes a bite.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)  
 And?

MARV ALBERT (on TV, overlapping)  
 After one, it's the Philadelphia  
 Seventy-Sixers 24, the New York  
 Knicks 19.

STEVE  
 Damn.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)  
 What's that?

STEVE (into phone)  
 Huh? Oh, sorry; I've got the  
 Knicks on in the background. The  
 story's coming along fine.

He looks around on a side table, picks up his reporting  
 notebook, and starts thumbing through it.

STEVE (into phone, Cont.)  
 I, umm ... made significant  
 progress last night.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)  
 I'll bet, but I don't care about  
 your social life, kid.

STEVE (into phone)  
 No, at rehearsal. I overheard  
 some stuff at rehearsal last  
 night. Not sure what to make of  
 it, though.

(pause)  
 I want to see Lauren again, talk  
 to her some more before I make a  
 judgment call on this?

CHRIS (OS, on phone)  
Sheppard, you know how this  
works, right?

(slowly and  
deliberately)

We print stuff that people want  
to read. When people read,  
advertisers want to buy space.  
When advertisers buy space, we  
get paid. Capice?

STEVE (into phone)  
Yeah, okay.

(pause)

Oh, I've got my lines now, too.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)  
Well there you go! We can run  
some excerpts and let the public  
decide if it's real.

STEVE (into phone)  
Come on, you know we can't do  
that. I've only seen the lines  
for the character I'm playing,  
anyway. And it'd blow my cover  
for the story!

There's a brief pause.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)  
Damn it. I guess you're right.  
You're off the hook, for now.  
Just call me after the next  
rehearsal. And try to actually  
have some details for me.

STEVE (into phone)  
Will do. I'll get you the  
readers, I always do.

Steve hangs up the phone and turns the volume up on the TV.

INT. MEXICAN RESTAURANT – DAY

Lauren and Steve are in a busy Mexican restaurant. They sit  
at a table next to the window, their burrito lunches wrapped  
in foil.

After a long pause, Lauren takes a big sip of her soda and looks up at Steve with a smile on her face.

STEVE

So....

LAUREN

Yeah?

STEVE

The rehearsal went well the other day, I thought.

The smile fades from Lauren's face.

LAUREN

Oh. Yeah.

STEVE

You didn't think so? I was no good, wasn't I? I'm still getting used to seeing only my own lines. It's hard setting a rhythm out of context.

LAUREN

No, no, it's not that. I just figured I was going to be in charge of the whole thing.

STEVE

Oh, the producer butting in, you mean. Ellis, right?

LAUREN

Ellis. Right.

STEVE

He's a bit more hands-on than most producers I've seen.

Lauren finishes her burrito, and takes what's left of the aluminum wrapping and balls it up. She clenches it tightly.

LAUREN

Yeah. He has ... well, let's just say he has a strong interest in making sure this play works.

STEVE

Seems like he's interested in more than that. You two are together all the time.

LAUREN

He's not here now. And how is that any of your business, anyway?

STEVE

Well, aren't we on a date? Our second date?

Lauren wipes her hands clean with a napkin.

LAUREN

Ellis and I used to date, okay? He's the one who got me this job. Without him, I'd still be toiling away in Hoboken.

STEVE

So you were dating when he asked you to direct? Were you two dating when I asked you out?

LAUREN

No, it was back when we were in grad school. Ancient history.

STEVE

How ancient could it be? He got you this job, right?

LAUREN

Yes, he rescued me from regional theatre hell. But I don't see what that has to do with you and me.

STEVE

You don't?

Steve sits back in his chair: arms crossed, defiant. Lauren stares at him.

STEVE (Cont.)

You don't think it's just a little bit odd that he came to you for this? There are plenty of other directors out there. Ones closer to Broadway than Hoboken.

Lauren glowers at Steve.

LAUREN

There are.... Ellis and I have some issues. There's a lack of trust between us -

STEVE

I can see why.

LAUREN

There's a lack of trust, but there are reasons he asked me.

STEVE

I don't suppose you want to share those reasons?

LAUREN

It's not important.

STEVE

Reasons like he's obviously not over you. Are you over him?

LAUREN

Excuse me?

STEVE

Are you over him?

LAUREN

That's ... none of your business.

Steve gets up from his seat.

STEVE

Suddenly, I'm not hungry anymore.

LAUREN

Steve, wait. I didn't mean-

STEVE

I'll see you at the theatre.

He leaves the restaurant. Lauren's head drops into her hands.

EXT. MEXICAN RESTAURANT (MOVING) - DAY

Steve storms out of the restaurant and heads down the block. He takes his cell phone and notebook out of his pocket and speed-dials a number on the phone.

STEVE (into phone)

Chris. Steve. Remember me saying I overheard something at the theatre the other night? Well, it sounds like the script is a fake. Listen to this: (reads from notebook) "We'll pull this off. You can count on me."

CHRIS (OS, on phone)

Sounds like we're getting a story. Who said that?

STEVE (into phone)

Ellis, the producer. Responding to Lauren's "If this is about trust, I have just as much reason for concern as you."

CHRIS (OS, on phone)

Lauren. The director, right? The one you're dating? She said that?

STEVE (into phone)

No, we're not exactly - I mean, she said it, but we're not ... never mind. I'm going to the theatre now to talk to Ellis.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)

Sounds good, keep me posted.

STEVE (into phone)

You know it. I'll nail them on this one.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (STAGE AREA) - DAY

Ellis is on the stage, checking props, when Steve enters. He straightens a chair, not noticing that Steve has walked up to the foot of the stage. Steve CLEARS HIS THROAT, and Ellis turns around.

ELLIS

Oh, Steve. Hey. You're early.  
We're not starting for a half-  
hour.

STEVE

I know. Do you have a minute?

ELLIS

Umm, sure. What's up?

Ellis walks to the front of the stage and looks down at Steve.

STEVE

The play.

ELLIS

What about it? Shouldn't you be  
asking the director?

STEVE

No, these questions are for you.

Ellis stares down at Steve.

ELLIS

Oh? Come on up. It's easier to  
talk face-to-face.

Steve nods, walks out the side door, and comes out on stage.  
He walks over to Ellis.

ELLIS (Cont.)

Have a seat. Doesn't the set look  
good?

STEVE

Sure.

Steve sits down at one of the chairs. Ellis sits in a chair  
opposite Steve.

ELLIS

So what can I do for you?

STEVE

I wanted to know about the play's  
origin. Lauren said you found it -

ELLIS

– In London, at the Globe Theatre excavation site.

STEVE

Yes, yes. I'm curious about that. I mean, I did some research.

Ellis raises an eyebrow in surprise.

ELLIS

You did? Have you been researching your part? Lucentio's role is much bigger in our play, but there's probably a wealth of information out there to draw upon.

STEVE

(overlapping)

I was curious. There's nothing in any Shakespeare books about this play.

ELLIS

I know. It was unknown until I found it; we're doing its debut. You know all that; Lauren must have told you.

STEVE

I know; I just had lunch with her. I wanted to ask you. You said you found the ... quarto, right?

ELLIS

You had lunch with Lauren? Why isn't she with you now?

STEVE

Can I see the play?

ELLIS

You have your lines.

Steve leans forward in his chair, and Ellis does the same. Their eyes are less than a foot apart.

STEVE

I mean, can I see what you found?  
The quarto?

ELLIS

It's in a safety deposit box  
across town. We don't have time  
to get there before the  
rehearsal.

STEVE

Uh-huh.

ELLIS

So where's Lauren?

STEVE

Oh, I don't know; we had an  
argument back at the restaurant.  
Maybe I shouldn't be dating the  
director.

ELLIS

No, maybe you shouldn't.

Ellis stands. In the b.g., we hear PEOPLE ENTERING the  
theatre.

ELLIS (Cont.)

So, any more questions? I need to  
finish setting up.

STEVE

No, I guess I'd better get ready  
too.

ELLIS

Okay then.

Steve gets up from the chair and walks off stage. Ellis spots  
Lauren entering the theatre from the lobby.

ELLIS

Lauren!

He waves for her to join him. She nods and walks up to the  
foot of the stage. Ellis squats close to her, at the edge of  
the stage.

LAUREN

What's up?

ELLIS

We need to talk.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (ELLIS'S OFFICE) – DAY

Ellis sits down at his desk, and Lauren enters, sitting down opposite him. He gestures for her to close the door, which she does.

LAUREN

Yeah?

ELLIS

It's Lucentio. Steve, I mean. He just asked me some rather pointed questions about the play.

LAUREN

Oh. I'm not surprised.

ELLIS

Have you seen him lately? I'm getting the feeling he's more than an actor.

LAUREN

(nodding)

We just had lunch together. Well, we tried to, but it didn't go well.

ELLIS

Sorry to hear that.

LAUREN

Are you?

She smiles at him. Ellis isn't sure what the smile means.

ELLIS

Are you hiding something from me?

LAUREN

No, I'm not.

ELLIS

We need to trust each other here.  
Complete honesty: like a  
relationship.

LAUREN

I've found that you, trust, and I  
don't make a good threesome.

ELLIS

Yeah, well we at least need to  
protect our work. Something  
doesn't smell right with Steve.

LAUREN

Look, there's nothing. I have to  
go get ready for the rehearsal.  
We can talk about this later.

ELLIS

Hey, before you go, I need to  
talk to you about the script.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (STAGE AREA) – AFTERNOON

Eileen is on stage running the rehearsal. On stage with her  
are Marisa and Dennis, as well as TIMOTHY (a redhead in his  
early 30s who was cast as Gremio) and several MINOR  
CHARACTERS. Eileen scans her script.

EILEEN

Okay, let's run this again.  
Petruccio, try leaving halfway  
through Hortensio's line, before  
the second "perchance." Just take  
it from that line, Hortensio.

Heidi comes in from backstage as Eileen walks off to the side  
stairs and comes out in the seating area. More actors,  
including Steve, sit in the audience.

The on-stage actors shuffle around to get into place. Heidi,  
in character as Katharina, puts an arm on Dennis's shoulder.  
Eileen takes a seat down the row from Steve and calls up to  
the stage.

EILEEN

Whenever you're ready.

Heidi gets a faraway look in her eyes, starts to CRY, and runs offstage. Ken watches after her. A smirk works its way across Dennis's face.

DENNIS (as Hortensio)  
If perchance the shrew is again  
untamed –

Ken runs offstage after Heidi.

DENNIS (as Hortensio, Cont.)  
Perchance may I gain Lucentio's  
argosies!

Before anyone can continue, Lauren's shouting voice stops them in their tracks.

LAUREN (OS)  
If you're not going to trust me,  
then why don't you just direct  
the fucking show!

A door SLAMS from the theatre's backstage office area. Immediately, it can be heard violently REOPENING.

ELLIS (OS)  
Lauren!

Everyone stares in shock as Lauren comes rushing into the stage area, in front of the seating. Her fists are clenched at her sides, and she seems to be fighting back tears. She stops for a second, looks over her shoulder back at the offices, then thinks better and heads for the theatre's exit.

Steve half-stands, but thinks better of it as Ellis comes walking in after Lauren. Ellis appears calm, but his eyes are wild. He struggles to keep from yelling.

ELLIS  
Lauren. Can we just discuss this,  
please? It's not a big deal.

Lauren stops at the door and turns to face Ellis.

LAUREN  
Maybe not to you.

ELLIS  
Can we please just talk about  
this?

LAUREN

Go ahead, talk. What is it you want to say, Ellis, huh?

Ellis looks around at everyone staring at them.

ELLIS

Not here. Come back to my office.

LAUREN

Go to hell.

With that, she spins to the door, walks out, and SLAMS it behind her. Ellis speechlessly stares after her.

And everyone else stares at Ellis.

For what seems like an eternity, nothing is said, and no one moves. The tension finally breaks when Ken very quietly CLEARS HIS THROAT. Ellis snaps.

ELLIS

What the hell is everyone standing and staring at me for? I'm paying you to act, not to stand there with your mouths hanging open breathing theatre air! So mind your own goddamned business and get back to work!

He retreats back to his office, MUTTERING as he goes. Eileen turns to the disbelieving cast.

EILEEN

Umm, five minutes, everyone. I'll go see what's up with Ellis.

Eileen follows him back to the offices.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (AUDIENCE AREA) – DAY

Lauren and Eileen sit in the front row of the audience, eating Chinese food out of take-out boxes.

EILEEN

Can I ask you something about Ellis?

LAUREN

What about him?

EILEEN

Are you guys.... Are you ... you know, dating him? Or anything?

Lauren sets down her food.

LAUREN

No, I'm not ... I mean, he and I aren't... "together." It's actually Steve that I'm kind of interested in.

EILEEN

I kinda thought that, but I also see what you and Ellis are like together. Like an old married couple or something.

LAUREN

It's confusing, I know. Ellis is.... Well, Ellis and I are.... I don't know what's going on.

EILEEN

With him? Or with Steve?

Before Lauren can answer, the door at the back of the theatre CLICKS open and Steve steps in. Eileen and Lauren both turn back to him, suddenly silent.

STEVE

Oh, hey. Sorry. I'm not interrupting anything, am I?

LAUREN

No, no ... you're just early, is all. We were just talking.

STEVE

Don't let me stop you. I want to hit the bathroom before we get started anyway.

He exits. Lauren smiles after him.

EILEEN

I'm gonna run home and grab a quick shower before the full rehearsal. You two try not to have too much fun in the one-on-one.

Lauren doesn't reply, but starts to clean up after their lunches. Eileen winks at her, and then leaves.

EXT. MANHATTAN – DAY

Ellis walks down the sidewalk with an old, tattered newspaper under his arm. He checks the time on a bank's external clock as he goes.

LAUREN (OS)

Okay, that's good, but you have to watch the inflections.

STEVE (OS)

How so?

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (STAGE AREA) – DAY

Lauren and Steve are alone on the stage, copies of the script in hand. Lauren has the director's copy, with the complete play, and Steve has his red cue sheets. They're in the midst of working on his lines.

LAUREN

Don't worry so much about the meter. Just read the line. You're almost there.

STEVE

What I ask is a simple task.

LAUREN

Exactly. See? It's not all iambic, obviously, so thinking about meter just gets in the way. Let's do it again.

Steve nods, and tilts his head back for moment, YAWNING.

LAUREN

Don't worry, we're almost there.

STEVE

No, no. I'm glad we're doing this; it's helping. It's just ... my mind is on something else.

Lauren looks down.

LAUREN

Yeah, I know. Don't worry.

She looks up at him and he looks her in the eye.

STEVE

I'm sorry.

LAUREN

It's okay. Back to work. Bianca says:

Lauren READS from the script.

LAUREN (Cont., as Bianca)

Soft, sister, our husbands have returned.

STEVE (as Lucentio)

'Twas not my mind to have us part; my business is my wife's as well, not mine alone....

Steve looks up from his cue sheets as his reading trails off. Lauren notices and looks up.

LAUREN

What?

STEVE

Mind telling me about what happened the other day between you and Ellis?

LAUREN

What?

STEVE

When we were working with Eileen.

LAUREN

What's your question?

STEVE

Well, what was the fight all about?

Lauren gestures to his cue sheets.

LAUREN

Come on, back to work. We don't have the time to worry about me and Ellis.

Steve continues looking at her instead of down at his cue sheets. He takes a calculated pause, waiting for the tension to rise before breaking it.

STEVE

Well?

LAUREN

We – Ellis and I – had a history. A long one. Things in London, with my Master's thesis. Look, can we just get back to work?

STEVE

You've told me about your history. But I'm still not clear: Had? Or have?

Lauren doesn't answer. She CLEARS HER THROAT and goes back to reading from the script.

LAUREN (as Petruchio)

'Tis most true.

Steve SIGHS before reading his next line, the one she was helping him with. He reads it perfectly.

STEVE (as Lucentio)

What I ask is a simple task. Kate, trust in your sister.

LAUREN

Good. You have it now. Moving on, Bianca says: (as Bianca) Kate, let us go. Let them reason and we may frame our affections anon.

EXT. COLUMBUS THEATRE – DAY

Ellis appears from around a corner and makes his way to the theatre's front entrance, still carrying the tattered newspaper.

STEVE (OS, as Lucentio)  
Go on; Leave us. You know you may  
trust in me.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (LOBBY) – DAY

Ellis enters the theatre and walks to the door into the audience and stage area.

LAUREN (OS, as Bianca)  
Trust, indeed. I do trust you,  
and your words I will heed.

STEVE (OS)  
All right. I got it. I just don't  
know what the hell is going on.

LAUREN (OS)  
How so? Kate and Bianca are  
leaving so that –

STEVE (OS)  
– Not that.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (STAGE AREA) – DAY

Ellis walks into the back of the audience seating area and stops to watch Lauren and Steve, who don't notice him.

STEVE  
You and Ellis. You and I.... I  
don't know.

LAUREN  
What you need to be concerned  
about is you and I.

STEVE  
Why?

LAUREN  
Because....

STEVE  
What?

LAUREN

Because ... this is tough. I was hoping to do this after opening night, when all we've done has paid off, but it can't wait.

Lauren pauses, looking away from Steve, who awaits her confession almost as anxiously as Ellis does, off-stage and still unnoticed.

Ellis looks like he's about to rush the stage and physically restrain her from talking. Steve gestures with his hand for her to continue.

LAUREN (Cont.)

I don't want to jeopardize what everyone's been working for. But trust is important. I have to confess....

Steve puts his hand on her shoulder.

STEVE

What? Look, I know trust is always hard, especially when it might ruin -

LAUREN

(quickly)

No, it's just that I think I'm falling in love with you. There, I've said it.

Ellis slumps down as if punched in the chest. He further recedes into the shadows, but continues to watch. Steve has a stunned smile on his face.

STEVE

Oh, wow. I can't.... That's the last thing I expected to hear.

LAUREN

Well, sorry. It's the truth.

STEVE

Don't be sorry.

They embrace.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (LOBBY) – DAY

Ellis walks out of the stage area and back into the lobby. He looks back at the door. No sound comes from the stage area.

After a moment, Ellis quietly exits the theatre and walks off into the street. The door silently swings shut behind him.

EXT. COLUMBUS THEATRE – DAY

Ellis walks down the street, away from the theatre. As he passes a trash can, he drops the newspaper in it, not missing a step.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT – DAY

Steve is half-dressed, talking on his cell phone.

STEVE (into phone)  
Chris, just calm down.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)  
"Calm down?" What is this "calm down?" It opens in three days, kid. Merriman is going to be there Friday night reviewing this show, and I don't even have so much as an outline from you yet!

STEVE (into phone)  
Think about this. Merriman writes his review. Praises it, pans it, says I suck as Lucentio; whatever, it doesn't matter.

CHRIS (OS, on phone)  
Meanwhile, we have jack. Steve—

STEVE (into phone)  
Meanwhile, we come in the next day with the inside story, making *The Times* look like idiots for reviewing a phony show. You'll get your story and your readers.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (STAGE AREA) – DAY

Lauren sits alone on a bench on the half-dark stage, staring out into the empty audience.

Eventually, Ellis (clad in a tuxedo) walks slowly up the aisle into Lauren's field of vision. The metal briefcase we first saw months ago is once again in his hand.

LAUREN

You make a cute penguin. Wasn't expecting you here until later.

Ellis holds up the briefcase.

LAUREN

Oh, the quarto. Right.

ELLIS

Adam's meeting me here to help set it up. Listen, uhh ... can I talk to you for a sec?

Lauren walks up to the front of the stage and crouches down.

LAUREN

Sure, what's up?

ELLIS

I'll keep it short. It's about Steve.

LAUREN

What about him?

ELLIS

He's not an actor.

LAUREN

Could've fooled me.

ELLIS

Yeah, well, me too. Turns out he's a reporter.

Lauren stands up.

ELLIS (Cont.)

Well?

Lauren turns away from him, heading back to the rear of the stage. She starts walking around and checking the scenery.

Ellis puts down the briefcase and walks up to the stage.

LAUREN

Come on, Ellis; you're wasting my time. If you really think he's a reporter, you can just -

ELLIS

I don't think, I know. I found out yesterday, and I came to the theatre to talk to you about it.

She stops messing with the set and turns to Ellis.

LAUREN

I was here all day for the one-on-one cast sessions. I didn't see you.

ELLIS

Maybe I didn't want to be seen.

LAUREN

Stop it, El! Where's your proof?

ELLIS

Just let me -

LAUREN

You're accusing him without any proof!

Ellis doesn't respond. They stare each other down for a moment, not saying a word. Finally, Ellis breaks the silence.

ELLIS

You just have to trust me. I'm doing this for you.

LAUREN

No, you're not. You're doing it for yourself.

Ellis doesn't answer. He merely picks up the briefcase, turns, and starts walking out. A few steps down the theatre aisle, he turns back to Lauren, but she has gone back to busying herself with the set.

EXT. COLUMBUS THEATRE - DAY

Above the entrance to the theatre, a large billboard marquee reads:

The Taming of the Shrew, Part 2  
 by William Shakespeare  
 Directed by Lauren Marrus

WORKERS stand on ladders, hanging a banner above the marquee. Ellis exits the theatre and steps onto the sidewalk, briefcase still in tow. He looks up and reads "World premiere tonight!" emblazoned on the banner. A wan smile works its way across his face.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (LOBBY) – NIGHT

A large CROWD dressed in formal wear is gathered, TALKING excitedly. The buzz is electric, and individual AD-LIBBED CONVERSATIONS overlap each other as the crowd CRESCENDOS.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (GREEN ROOM) – NIGHT

The actors stand around in various stages of make-up and costume. It's surprisingly quiet, as they're mostly too nervous to speak. Steve sits at a mirror, getting the finishing touches done on his makeup.

In the doorway, Lauren stands TALKING with Eileen. The STAGE MANAGER walks up to them from backstage and holds up two fingers. Lauren nods and turns to face the actors.

LAUREN

Okay, curtain in two minutes.  
 Break a leg, folks!

A few actors SIGH and stretch out, loosening up for the debut performance of *The Taming of the Shrew, Part 2*.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (LOBBY) – NIGHT

Ellis approaches a group of workers who are taking a bundle, protected with bubble wrap, out of a large crate. As the bundle is unwrapped, an elegant display stand is revealed.

Across the lobby, over by the merchandise stand, Adam Winter is helping to unpack boxes with STARLIGHT PUBLISHING printed on the side.

ELLIS

Adam, come here for a minute.

Adam turns and sees Ellis. He nods and starts walking over.

ELLIS

No, take a book with you. We're ready to set things up.

Adam takes a book from one of the boxes and heads over to Ellis. Ellis sets his briefcase down and unlocks it. Inside are the original quarto sheets that he showed to Lauren long ago. He takes out the cotton gloves and puts them on.

ADAM

It really is so beautiful. I'm glad we decided to print a replication instead of just the text.

ELLIS

I know. Here's the deal: Only I touch the play. You just need to check that the pages I'm displaying are still in the right order.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (STAGE AREA) – NIGHT

The house lights start to dim, and the sold-out audience slowly quiets. Soon, the theatre is silent and totally dark.

Then, the silence is quickly broken by the SLIDE of the opening curtain. A spotlight shines on stage, and Timothy, in costume as Gremio, walks out with Dennis, in costume as Hortensio.

TIMOTHY (as Gremio)

Good friend! You've returned.

DENNIS (as Hortensio)

Aye, indeed. The time, 'twas ripe for homecoming; a year on the waves hath rendered me both seasick and homesick, with no angels t'show. Pray tell, what hath passed upon the shores of Padua these moons gone by?

TIMOTHY (as Gremio)

What has happened be both much and little, but a pot of ale must wet my tongue to loose it. Come, let us away to the Hart's Horn!

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (LOBBY) – NIGHT

Adam watches as Ellis carefully places the original quarto pages into the display, in several neatly fanned stacks. At the far left of the display, the cover page sits in a gold frame. Behind them, the workers set up velvet ropes.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (STAGE AREA) – NIGHT

Ken, Heidi, Steve, and Marisa stand on stage, in costume.

STEVE (as Lucentio)

Then in truth, Petruchio, how can thy answer be naught but an affirmation? For in thy breast doth the truth lie, and in thy breast lieth thy family: the fair Kate, her sister ... and myself.

KEN (as Petruchio)

Aye, but in truth, lie tests of will. And I question whether my wife be untrain'd therein: if truth lie in my breast and mine alone, obedience is at hand. Now my gentle Kate, in sooth, art thou of a mind to go or to stay?

HEIDI (as Katharina)

My choice and my duty belong to thee, and my wisdom is yours as well, as with my mind and my heart: All to your keeping they lie.

MARISA (as Bianca)

O! Hath the lady no longer a choice of her own? Kate, surely must there be more to thy mind as once there was?

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (LOBBY) – NIGHT

Adam checks each page of the quarto with the appropriate printed page in the book, and nods as he looks over things. A crowd of workers stares in awe at the display.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (STAGE AREA) – NIGHT

Ken and Steve stand on the stage.

STEVE (as Lucentio)  
 S'blood, man, 'tis plain there be  
 none but us and the wind!

Marisa subtly reveals that she has been hiding on stage. She looks out into the audience and holds a finger to her lips, prompting a wave of CHUCKLES from the audience.

KEN (as Petruchio)  
 Good, then our plot shall go  
 forth as such: Let me know what  
 th'answers to thy questions be,  
 then thy ballot be mine to take.  
 The answers shall lead me to thy  
 fleet.

Marisa sneaks offstage, unseen by Steve and Ken.

STEVE (as Lucentio)  
 A most excellent plan, i'faith,  
 my friend! We shall make it come  
 to light to-morrow.

An actor dressed as a SERVANT comes out from stage right and approaches Ken.

SERVANT  
 Sir, thy wife calls for your  
 return.

Ken nods and turns to Steve.

STEVE (as Lucentio)  
 Go and tend to her; our business  
 is set. Now, as to my wife;  
 wonderment would be mine if I  
 were to know where she hath gone  
 to.

Steve and Ken follow the servant offstage. Soon, the stage is briefly empty, but Marisa suddenly steps back out.

MARISA (as Bianca)

The craven, idle-headed popinjay!  
 He hath duped my husband as like  
 my sister. This shall not stand  
 forth; it cannot be thus easy for  
 such dullards. They seek to form  
 a pact: answers for questions. I,  
 then, shall seek the questions  
 themselves! The answers be the  
 easy part, 'tis the questions  
 must be well form'd; and thus the  
 questions are my quest; I shall  
 seek them out, and exchange them  
 for mine own, and none shall be  
 awares. Th'answers Petruchio be  
 provided shall not gain what he  
 desires. Their packing shall gain  
 them naught; for my sister I owe  
 this; she may be well tam'd, but  
 I will not abide her husband  
 playing us as he might a viol.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (LOBBY) – NIGHT

Ellis and two SECURITY GUARDS stand beside the velvet-roped  
 entranceway to the display of the play's quarto sheets.

ELLIS

No one is allowed closer than two  
 feet to the display. Understand?

The guards nod.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (STAGE AREA) – NIGHT

Most of the cast has assembled on stage. Several  
 CONVERSATIONS go on at the same time on different parts of  
 the stage: Timothy and Dennis have been talking with Ken and  
 Heidi at stage right.

TIMOTHY (as Gremio)

Marks upon marks on't, she doth  
 remain as before!

DENNIS (as Hortensio)

T'would be a wonder, should she  
 remain so.

KEN (as Petruchio)  
 I'faith, a year has it been, but  
 it took me not a month to make it  
 as such; am I not correct, wife?

HEIDI (as Katharina)  
 If it please you, it be as such,  
 as it shall be so for Katharina.

Dennis and Timothy start to smile, nearly giggling.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (BACKSTAGE) – NIGHT

Ellis stands with Lauren and Eileen, watching the action on stage. As actors come off stage, Eileen walks off with them, whispering encouragement into their ears as they head to the green room.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (STAGE AREA) – NIGHT

The entire cast is on stage; we're at the finale of the play.

STEVE (as Lucentio)  
 The ballot is done and the cause  
 be settled; half shall go to  
 sister Katharina.

KEN (as Petruchio)  
 And th'other?

STEVE (as Lucentio)  
 To the one with second in  
 response correct.

HEIDI (as Katharina)  
 Then who shall share with me?

STEVE (as Lucentio)  
 T'were two with such results:  
 Hortensio and Gremio.

TIMOTHY (as Gremio)  
 Sooth?

Steve nods. Timothy and Dennis go and stand next to Heidi. Dejected, Ken stands back, watching.

KEN (as Petruchio)  
 Come, Kate, we have much to  
 discuss, and I, much on which  
 t'atone.

HEIDI (as Katharina)  
 For once, thou speak'st the  
 truth.

Heidi looks at Ken, who starts to walk offstage. After a moment's hesitation, she follows him. Soon, the bulk of the cast leave the stage, save for Timothy and Dennis standing together under a spotlight.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (AUDIENCE AREA) – NIGHT

In the back section, Dr. Northfield sits with his wife, EVELYN. He has a notepad on his lap and has made a few notes throughout the performance.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (BACKSTAGE) – NIGHT

Ellis and Lauren stand alone together. We watch them as the final strains of the play are heard onstage.

As we watch Lauren closely, Ellis slips away behind her. Lauren, meanwhile, looks as if she's the happiest she's ever been.

TIMOTHY (as Gremio, OS)  
 A plot to gain the argosies hath  
 fallen afore me, upon which they  
 be ours not in parcel but in  
 whole.

DENNIS (as Hortensio, OS)  
 Upon my word, thou hast learned  
 to be careful; and should  
 Petruchio not defend our claim,  
 our fortunes and our futures be  
 set!

Lauren now stands entirely alone as, far behind her, Ellis walks toward the backstage offices.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (OFFICE AREA) – NIGHT

Ellis walks to his office. Timothy and Dennis's DIALOGUE fades out the further he gets. Ellis turns around before entering his office and sees Lauren from behind. In silhouette, illuminated by the stage lights, she looks almost angelic.

Ellis lowers his head and enters the office.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (ELLIS'S OFFICE) – NIGHT

MAD APPLAUSE breaks out in the audience, OS, as Ellis enters his office. The SOUND is suddenly muted as Ellis closes the door. He walks to his desk and drops into the chair.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (BACKSTAGE) – NIGHT

Lauren listens to the APPLAUSE as the play ends. She turns to face Ellis and suddenly notices that he's not there anymore. She turns around and looks toward the backstage offices.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (ELLIS'S OFFICE) – NIGHT

Ellis sits at his desk, looking through the Starlight Publishing edition of the play. He looks up when he hears a soft KNOCK at the door.

ELLIS

Yes?

Lauren opens the door and peeks in.

LAUREN

Here you are.

He gestures to an open notebook ledger on his desk.

ELLIS

We're going to be rich, you know.

LAUREN

We are.

ELLIS

What are you doing here?

LAUREN

Play's done. And judging by the audience's reaction, I'd say it's a hit.

ELLIS

I know, you did great.

Ellis holds up the Starlight edition of the play.

ELLIS (Cont.)

The book looks great, too.

LAUREN

We did great, Ellis. Come on, we have applause to bask in.

She beckons for him to come out of the office with her.

ELLIS

I'll pass. The applause doesn't matter anymore.

LAUREN

Why not? I would think you'd be out there enjoying your success.

ELLIS

It's not the same.

LAUREN

Why not?

ELLIS

It's just that ... I was hoping I'd be able to share that applause with you. I don't need any of my own.

Lauren nods.

LAUREN

I had a feeling.

ELLIS

But not the same feeling I had. I guess I was hoping to rekindle something after all.

LAUREN

The bookend hasn't been closed yet.

She smiles at him. Ellis smiles back questioningly. Lauren turns back to the door.

LAUREN (Cont.)

I probably should get back out there. See you at the party?

ELLIS

You bet.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (STAGE AREA) – NIGHT

The stage is crowded with several dozen cast members. We concentrate on the primary cast (Ken, Heidi, Steve, Marisa, etc.) as they are at the center of a line, holding hands and bowing.

Applause from the audience becomes a DEAFENING ROAR, as they give the actors a standing ovation.

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (LOBBY) – NIGHT

The lobby is once again mobbed as the audience exits the theatre area. Throughout the scene, a loud and virtually incomprehensible CLAMOR of audience praise and discussion echoes in the lobby.

Dr. Northfield and his wife enter the lobby, carrying their overcoats. As he helps her on with her coat, he sees the display of quarto sheets.

DR. NORTHFIELD

Ahh, good ... here as promised.

EVELYN

What's that, dear?

He points out the display to her.

DR. NORTHFIELD

The original quarto. The producer told me it would be on display, but I didn't see it when we came in. I'm going to take a look.

Evelyn nods as he walks over to the display case. Already, a half-dozen PEOPLE are waiting. Dr. Northfield takes his place at the rear of the queue, his wife at his arm.

Meanwhile, Ellis exits from the stage area and stands by the quarto display. He listens to the AUDIENCE PRAISE and finally starts to relax and smile a bit. A middle-aged REPORTER, tape recorder in hand, approaches him.

REPORTER

Mr. Strahan?

ELLIS

Yeah?

REPORTER

Bernard Merriman, *New York Times*.  
Do you have a moment?

ELLIS

Of course.

The reporter looks over, impressed, at the display.

REPORTER

So this is it? The actual  
document?

Ellis nods and turns around to glance at the display. As the interview continues, Dr. Northfield sees Ellis and smiles. His wife tugs at his arm.

EVELYN

Come on, it's getting late. It's  
going to take forever to hail a  
cab now.

Dr. Northfield gestures for her to wait a moment while he walks over to Ellis. The reporter shuts off his tape recorder and steps back as Dr. Northfield slips a business card out of his pocket.

DR. NORTHFIELD

Excuse me, Ellis. Julius  
Northfield, we met at Adam  
Winter's office?

ELLIS

Yes, I remember.

DR. NORTHFIELD

Excellent production. It really  
brought the story alive.

ELLIS

Thank you very much.

DR. NORTHFIELD

Certainly. I'd love the  
opportunity to hear more about  
how you found the script.

He hands the business card to Ellis, who accepts it and looks it over. Nodding, he places it in his pocket. The reporter takes advantage of the interruption by glancing through a notebook.

ELLIS

I'll be sure to contact you. But, if you don't mind, I'm in the middle of an interview right now.

DR. NORTHFIELD

Oh, yes, of course. My apologies. At your leisure.

Ellis smiles at him. Dr. Northfield offers his hand, and Ellis accepts. They shake hands, smiling together, before Dr. Northfield walks away. The reporter clicks his tape recorder back on.

REPORTER

And what prompted you to hire Lauren Marrus to direct?

ELLIS

When looking to produce this play, I waited for the perfect opportunity. I wanted to make sure everything was perfect. You don't wait for more than a dozen years and then not get what you want.

EXT. COLUMBUS THEATRE - NIGHT

Outside, the audience DISCUSSION continues. A crowd has formed on the sidewalk in front of the theatre: audience members unwilling or unable to leave without discussing the play further.

A few people break apart from the crowd, some getting in taxis, some simply walking away. But the bulk of the audience remains as Ellis's interview continues inside.

ELLIS (OS)

Lauren is an old friend of mine, plus she has the requisite theatre experience any play would need, plus a PhD in Shakespearean studies that I knew would be required to authenticate this play. And, most importantly, we wanted to present the play as it would've been, four hundred years ago....

Ellis's interview is slowly rendered inaudible as the DIN from the crowd outside overwhelms it.

FADE TO:

INT. COLUMBUS THEATRE (LOBBY) – NIGHT

The crowds have now completely dispersed, and Ellis stands alone, holding his coat in the empty lobby. He stares down at the quarto display case. A smile plays across his face as he puts on his coat and walks to the front doors.

INT. ELLIS'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Trays of food are set up everywhere, with a couple of CATERERS attending. Ellis's apartment is packed with cast and crew celebrating the successful debut of *The Taming of the Shrew, Part 2*. Ellis, however, is nowhere to be seen.

A general din of REVELRY forces everyone to SHOUT to be heard. In one corner, a group of bit players and crew members (including Eileen) lets out a CHEER, and people CLINK glasses of champagne and drink.

Lauren is with this group, looking very happy, and even amused when she is asked to autograph the play's book.

Across the room, a circle of the primary actors, Steve, Heidi, Ken, and Marisa among them, hold copies of the book.

KEN

So, this is what it looks like all together.

HEIDI

What, you didn't figure everything out before now?

MARISA

I just knew my stuff and all my cues that were part of everyone else's. Only I always thought I was playing the main character!

STEVE

Funny, I always thought I was!

They all LAUGH LOUDLY. Lauren, looking over to see what's so funny, catches Steve's eye. They smile at each other.

Roger walks over with a bottle of vodka and a shot glass. He calls for Lauren to join them.

ROGER

Lauren, come on! It's tradition!  
A shot for the victorious  
director!

Lauren sets an empty wine glass down on a counter and walks over to the group. Roger pours her a shot, spilling onto his hand and the carpet. Those nearby YELL at his sloppiness.

LAUREN

No, really, I -

MARISA

Come on!

KEN

Don't be a spoilsport!

Roger hands Lauren the shot glass as she walks over. She raises it high in the air, and most of the partygoers turn to see what's going on.

LAUREN

Okay, okay! To the shrew!

Glasses are raised all around.

ALL

To the shrew!

The vodka in Lauren's shot goes down fast, and everyone CHEERS. As she lowers the glass, she starts COUGHING. Steve steps to her and puts his arm around her shoulder.

STEVE

You okay?

Lauren smiles at Steve, a slightly glazed-over look in her eyes.

LAUREN (to Steve)  
I'm fantastic.

ROGER  
No, no! One more. We're not letting you get away with that sorry display!

The front door opens and Ellis walks in, late to his own party. He seems congenial, if not jovial. Lauren spots him immediately and yells to him across the room.

LAUREN  
Ellis! Baby, we pulled it off!

She runs through the crowd and throws her arms around him. He reluctantly hugs her back and smiles weakly. Steve warily watches them, making eye contact with Ellis.

ELLIS  
You pulled it off, Lauren. It's always been you. You know that.

They end their embrace. Lauren looks at him, expectantly.

LAUREN  
What are you saying?

ELLIS  
You've never needed me to do this. Everything that happened tonight was your doing. Play to performance: all you. You haven't needed me since day one.

Steve walks over to join Lauren and Ellis, picking up a bottle of beer on his way. The NOISE of the party continues behind them, enveloping their conversation in privacy.

LAUREN  
Ellis, there wouldn't have been a *Shrew 2* without you. Don't you realize that by now?

ELLIS  
What did I do?

STEVE

That's a good question. What did you do? I think it's time for you to actually answer some of my questions, Ellis.

ELLIS

What questions? Why?

STEVE

The questions I've been asking all along. I haven't been pumping you for information out of idle curiosity; I'm a newspaper reporter.

Ellis turns to Lauren with a self-satisfied smile. She simply stares at Steve in disbelief.

ELLIS

(to Lauren)

See?

LAUREN

(to Steve)

You're what?

STEVE

A reporter. I cover arts for the *New York Local Daily*. I auditioned because I had a hunch that you weren't doing the original *Shrew*.

LAUREN

Ellis....

She turns to face Ellis and sees his smirk. Lauren just gapes, and the smirk slowly fades.

LAUREN (Cont.)

So you really were telling the truth earlier?

ELLIS

I told you to trust me.

LAUREN

Sure, but why is it you never seem to have anything to back up your claims when you ask me that?

Ellis SIGHS.

ELLIS

I did. I had an article that Steve wrote. Only when I saw that he was ... that you and he were....

STEVE

Umm, excuse me? I'm still standing here. And though I'm pretty certain this whole thing is bogus, I still have questions.

Ellis starts to protest, but Steve continues before he can get a word out.

STEVE (Cont.)

Now: Thanks to Lauren, I know that "Gus Shakespeare" didn't write this play. So you may as well give me the truth now, Ellis: You wrote this play, didn't you?

ELLIS

No.

Steve shakes his head, not believing, and turns to Lauren.

STEVE

Tell me, since I trust you more than him: Did Ellis write the play?

LAUREN

No.

STEVE

Did Shakespeare? William Shakespeare?

She gazes at him for a moment, then turns to Ellis. Almost imperceptibly, Ellis gives her a nod.

LAUREN

No. I wrote it.

STEVE

You?

Lauren takes a deep breath and starts explaining:

LAUREN

When Ellis first came to me about this project, he had no idea what to expect....

FADE TO:

INT. HOBOKEN RESTAURANT – AFTERNOON

Flashback to the deli in Hoboken, as Ellis explains his plans to Lauren over lunch.

LAUREN (VO)

The whole thing was Ellis's idea, sort of. He wanted to bring me in, figuring I'd know how to help him, and he wouldn't be able to pull this off himself. At least those were the reasons he gave me at the time. Anyway, first, he tries to tell me he found the script at the Globe excavation site in London in 1989.

ELLIS (VO)

I was just trying to prove that it was possible.

LAUREN (VO)

It's believable with the evidence we've put together, but at the time, I didn't buy it at all. I kept listening, though, since I was curious about what he really had in mind.

Ellis hands the folder labeled TAMING to Lauren.

BACK TO:

INT. ELLIS APARTMENT – NIGHT

Steve listens intently to Ellis and Lauren, who start to act like a couple that's been together too long, competing with each other to tell a story. Lauren's giddiness is apparent, and her infectious enthusiasm carries itself to Ellis.

LAUREN

So to convince me to come on board, he gives me this folder.

ELLIS

It had my plans on how to write a new sequel to *Shrew*.

LAUREN

(overlapping)

A new sequel to *Shrew*! He didn't find a damn thing at the Globe site!

ELLIS

Actually....

LAUREN

And the plot in this folder ... well, it was just really awful.

ELLIS

Gee, thanks.

LAUREN

You know it was, Ellis. That's why you asked me for my help.

CUT TO:

INT. HOBOKEN RESTAURANT – AFTERNOON

We're back in the Hoboken deli. Lauren starts to look through the TAMING folder's contents as Ellis continues explaining. This time, we hear his explanation.

ELLIS

Assuming I can convince you to help out, here's what I need for you to do for me – or, with me – or, to me.

LAUREN

(impatiently)

Ellis?

ELLIS

Right. Sorry. Anyway, I've already done a lot of work on this myself. You're right; I didn't find a play at the Globe site. But you've gotta admit it's believable.

LAUREN

I suppose.

ELLIS

And I'm sure you can massage this into a believable script to go along with my believable story.

Lauren continues going through the pages. The further she moves into the document, the bigger her frown gets.

LAUREN

You really think this can be done?

ELLIS

Sure. Abraham Lincoln was wrong.

LAUREN

Huh?

ELLIS

You can fool all of the people all of the time.

Lauren holds up the folder to him.

LAUREN

Not with this crap, you can't. I'm going to have to give this some thought, Ellis.

Lauren begins to get up, but Ellis stops her. He continues trying to persuade her, but we hear Steve instead.

STEVE (VO)

So if that was crap, then what did we perform? You wrote a different script?

LAUREN (VO)

Well, yeah, but not right then.

BACK TO:

INT. ELLIS'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Steve is hanging on Lauren's every word. Ellis stands with his arms crossed, watching.

STEVE

I don't follow. He only came to you a couple of years ago, right? How long could you have waited before you wrote this thing?

ELLIS

She didn't wait. She had years. Before I even came to her.

STEVE

I don't follow.

ELLIS

After she accepted my offer, she explained to me that she had already written it after she got her PhD, as a lark.

LAUREN

Actually, that's not entirely true either. It wasn't really after my PhD.

ELLIS

What?

FADE TO:

INT. LAUREN'S LONDON APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Back in 1989, Lauren lies in bed alone, asleep. The orange readout on the digital clock glows "2:41." She begins to stir.

LAUREN (VO)

That night you were out touring the Globe site alone, I didn't exactly sleep as well as you figured.

As Lauren's arm reaches over to find the absent Ellis, her eyes squint open. She rolls over, notices that he's missing, and slowly looks around the room. She leans up on her elbow.

LAUREN (VO, Cont.)

I had one of those thoughts in the middle of the night. The kind that half wakes you up ... just enough to make sure it's something you don't forget. I don't know if it was passing by the Globe site that got my mind running, or something else, but the idea just struck me.

Lauren groggily reaches onto the nightstand and grabs a pen and a small notepad. We see her scribble "TAMING SHREW – SEQUEL?" almost illegibly. She puts the pen back on the nightstand, but accidentally drops the notepad on the floor. It lands written-side down.

Across the room is a stack of Shakespeare books, including several plays. At the top is a copy of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

BACK TO:

INT. ELLIS'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Ellis now looks just as surprised as Steve.

LAUREN

I fell back asleep almost immediately. I guess I never really wondered why you weren't there ... maybe figured you were in the bathroom or something. And I forgot about that idea until later –

She shoots Ellis a look.

LAUREN (Cont.)

– when, thanks to you, it turned out I needed it.

ELLIS

Whoa, whoa. Wait just a second. You're trying to tell me you wrote this as your –

LAUREN

(interrupting)

Relax, El. No one's going to make the connection: I never used it. I mean, yeah, I did intend for it to be my new thesis, but I figured it wasn't "academic" enough in the end. I thought about writing something else about the induction, but it just never came together. No one saw the script but me. Until now.

Ellis just stares, not quite sure of whether to believe what he's heard. A smile widens across Steve's face, as if all the pieces have now come together for him.

STEVE

Unbelievable. Almost. So what was your original idea, Ellis?

ELLIS

Well, Lucentio gets killed in the first scene.

STEVE

Oh.

Ellis looks up at Lauren. He stares at her for a moment, contemplating his next move.

LAUREN

Yes?

ELLIS

So you weren't entirely truthful with me after all?

LAUREN

Guess not. Sorry.

ELLIS

Well, it's only fair. You've been right all along: I haven't been entirely truthful either.

LAUREN

Oh really? And what exactly have you been keeping from me?

ELLIS

I tried to say earlier: I didn't exactly come back from the Globe site empty handed.

STEVE

Hey, guess you didn't really need to write this script after all, Lauren!

Steve LAUGHS, spilling some beer from his bottle onto the floor.

ELLIS

Nah, she still needed to write it. Only Gus Shakespeare writes sequels.

FADE TO:

EXT. GLOBE EXCAVATION SITE (BELOW) – NIGHT

The full moon shines in the sky as Ellis looks around the bottom of the Globe excavation site.

He takes a small flashlight on a key ring out of his pocket and starts shining it around the corners of the excavated area.

ELLIS (VO)

William Shakespeare, fortunately for us, does leave stuff besides unproduced plays lying around. Well, probably not him personally, but someone did.

With his back to us, Ellis crouches down in a corner. He has found something, but his body blocks us from seeing what it is as he picks it up and stuffs it in his book bag.

BACK TO:

INT. ELLIS'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Lauren and Steve both look at Ellis expectantly.

LAUREN

So what was left lying around?

ELLIS

Paper. Blank paper, I mean.  
Didn't you ever wonder how that  
quarto came out looking so  
authentic?

STEVE

I know I did.

LAUREN

No, not really. You said you had  
a friend with access to the  
printing museum, so I figured you  
used a vintage press there.

ELLIS

Sure, but the press wasn't the  
only vintage part of the  
equation. I guess that they  
hadn't gotten to that corner of  
the Globe site yet, or were  
leaving things untouched, or ...  
I don't know what. But damned if  
there wasn't paper there. And if  
it wasn't 16th Century, it sure  
looked like it to me.  
Conveniently sized, and plenty of  
it. Hell, there's enough for  
another play, if you want to  
write another sequel.

LAUREN

Hmm ... *Thirteenth Night*, anyone?

(pause)

Well, after we do my original  
stuff. Don't forget our deal,  
Ellis: first *Shrew 2*, then  
*Morelli's Lies*.

ELLIS

Let's just make sure we have the  
funds after this. And don't end  
up in prison.

LAUREN

We really are going to get away  
with this, aren't we? Unless  
Steve's mysterious source has any  
more friends in the newspaper  
business.

STEVE

Actually, my source only knew about Ellis wanting to publish the *Shrew* sequel.

FADE TO:

INT. DINER – MORNING

Back to the diner where Ellis showed the play to Lauren for the first time. Tina, sitting with Steve, points out Ellis as he enters the diner.

TINA

See that guy who just walked in? Ellis Strahan. We're publishing his new book.

Steve looks over his shoulder at Ellis, who spots Lauren in the far corner of the diner and walks over to her.

STEVE

And? That's the big news story?

TINA

His book isn't his, it's William Shakespeare's.

Steve turns back to Tina, who has a big smile on her face.

STEVE

What's this, now?

TINA

*Taming of the Shrew, Part 2.*

STEVE

There's a part 2?

TINA

Coming this fall, published exclusively in North America by Skylight Publishing.

Steve turns to look at Ellis and Lauren, who are going through the play's quarto sheets.

BACK TO:

INT. ELLIS'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Steve gestures toward Ellis.

STEVE

When I saw "Ellis Strahan" connected with auditions for the original Shrew, I figured it'd be worth checking out. And when he pulled out that "special scene," I had a feeling we weren't going to be putting on the original *Shrew* at all. Once I saw how close to the vest you played everything, I suspected what we were putting on was just a put-on: A forged script.

LAUREN

See? I told you the actors were getting suspicious!

ELLIS

Well, the reporters were.

STEVE

How did you find me out, anyway?

ELLIS

Well, I knew something was wrong when you two started, umm ... spending a lot of time together. I mean, you're a nice guy, Steve, but I didn't trust you. I found out why a little while ago.

FADE TO:

INT. SUBWAY CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Ellis sits alone on a subway car. He leans down and picks a discarded and tattered newspaper off the floor and looks through it. He stops when he sees Steve's name and photograph above a story.

ELLIS (VO, Cont.)

The *New York Local Daily*. Small enough of a paper to go under our radar for a while, but not so small I couldn't stumble across it. Of course, it was too late at that point, so I figured I'd let things go and try to ... well, to use it to get Lauren to spend less time with you.

BACK TO:

INT. ELLIS'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Steve smiles at Ellis's comment. Lauren looks on, almost defeated.

LAUREN

So I guess everything's out in the open now. (to Steve) You've got the whole story now.

STEVE

Hell of a story, at that. Worthy of the *Times* Arts section, I'd think.

LAUREN

I suppose you can tell the whole world, if you have to.

Lauren takes a slight step away from Steve, brushing shoulders with Ellis, who notices and glances over at her.

STEVE

I'm not sure I want to, now. What would be the point?

ELLIS

Fame? Fortune? I know that's not what I was after, but I figure you don't see yourself staying with a rag like the *Local Daily* forever.

STEVE

That's true.

Ellis puts his arm on Lauren's shoulder. She freezes in place, but doesn't stop him.

ELLIS

Of course, that also means you'd have to roll over me, and Lauren, and I'll do everything in my power to prevent that. I'd fire you right now and sue your ass first thing Monday morning for breach of contract. You'd never get the story published.

STEVE

Maybe not. But I don't think that matters.

ELLIS

Why not?

STEVE

I can't write this story.

LAUREN

And why's that?

Ellis slowly returns his arm to his side.

STEVE

A writer needs to be objective, and this has become too personal for me to write about because.... Well, I've fallen madly in love with Gus Shakespeare.

Ellis watches helplessly as Lauren LAUGHS and steps back toward Steve, pulling him into a tight embrace.

LAUREN

And I, being mad myself, am madly mated.

Steve and Lauren kiss. Ellis looks down at the floor, then turns away to give them some privacy.

As Ellis glances around at the party, he sees Eileen chatting with some of the other actors. They all LAUGH at some witty remark, and she spies him out of the corner of her eye and turns to face him.

She beckons him over with a smile. Ellis, with nothing but a quick glance at the still-liplocked Lauren and Steve, walks over to join Eileen's group, picking up a glass of champagne on his way.

Eileen leads him aside and whispers something in his ear. He smiles and they clink their glasses together. Strangely, we hear the oddly familiar voice of Christopher Sly:

SLY (VO)

Aye, that's for me. A story told  
well. 'Twas full of intrigue and  
humor fine. A love story, as  
well. Players, well done! All  
befits your wakened Lord on this  
eve.

INT. DARKENED ROOM – EVENING

A gigantic widescreen television provides the only light as a small group gazes at the screen. We cannot quite make out any faces due to the darkness, but the voices are familiar.

SLY (Cont.)

Enough! No more. Thy story was  
quite fine, but my eyes grow  
weary of the dim light. Remove  
thy disc and illuminate my  
chamber once again.

An unknown woman, with a strikingly familiar silhouette, stands and approaches the television. She bends down, and the picture on the TV goes to solid blue.

CU: A delicate female hand reaches down to a DVD player and presses a button. The tray slides open, revealing an intricately silk-screened DVD with the following text:

TAMING SHAKESPEARE:

The Second Part of THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

The lights come up in the room as a large and intricate window drapery is withdrawn. We are in a modern, high-rent, London flat: The twilight-lit Big Ben clock tower can be seen out the window. An expensive leather couch and plush chairs are set up to face the television. Meats, cheeses, and mugs of ale are piled upon a steel-framed glass coffee table.

In the center of the couch sits Christopher Sly, wearing expensive clothes and jewelry ... finally, we recognize his voice as being the same as that of Steve's editor, Chris.

SLY (CHRIS)

Now, madam wife, 'twas time you did come t'bed. Servants, leave us to renew after these fifteen year.

Ellis sits next to Sly on the couch. Or at least it looks like Ellis, though his dress and demeanor are more becoming a Lord. He starts to LAUGH.

LORD (ELLIS)

Oh, thou art a rogue, Christopher Sly! These servants are not thine, nor thy raiments, this banquet, nor yon picture tube and player of film discs. And as for thy wife....

He points across to the other side of Sly.

LORD (ELLIS, Cont.)

'Tis naught but mine own page!

On the other side of Sly sits a male Page, in disguise as a woman. The disguise is surprisingly effective, but as he pulls off the wig, we see the amazing likeness to Steve. The Lord ROARS with laughter.

PAGE (STEVE)

A practice was played upon you;  
so that you might b'lieve the  
Lord was you, and not my Master.

The female Servant, whom we finally see as being Lauren – or perhaps her doppelgänger – walks back from the television, holding the DVD. She begins to LAUGH as she places the DVD in a plastic case. The cover of the case is decorated like the quarto's cover sheet.

SERVANT (LAUREN)

Aye, and most well played! Both  
players a'screen and those  
playing upon Sly!

Sly briefly looks upset and confused as the servant returns the DVD to a large glass-doored bookcase. Slowly, a smile appears on Sly's face and he begins to CHUCKLE along with everyone else. He's obviously good enough to have a sense of humor about himself.

SLY (CHRIS)

O! Thou knaves! Most well played  
indeed, as t'was naught but a  
dream to me all along!

As the entire group begins to LAUGH, more ale is poured, and the party continues. We scan about, and more faces in the crowd are revealed to be there, too, including Eileen and the cast of *Shrew 2*.

The times have changed, as well as the stage, but the players remain the same....

FADE OUT.